



21 AUG 98

ROBINSON
HARRIS
VON CRAWBACHER

STARMAN



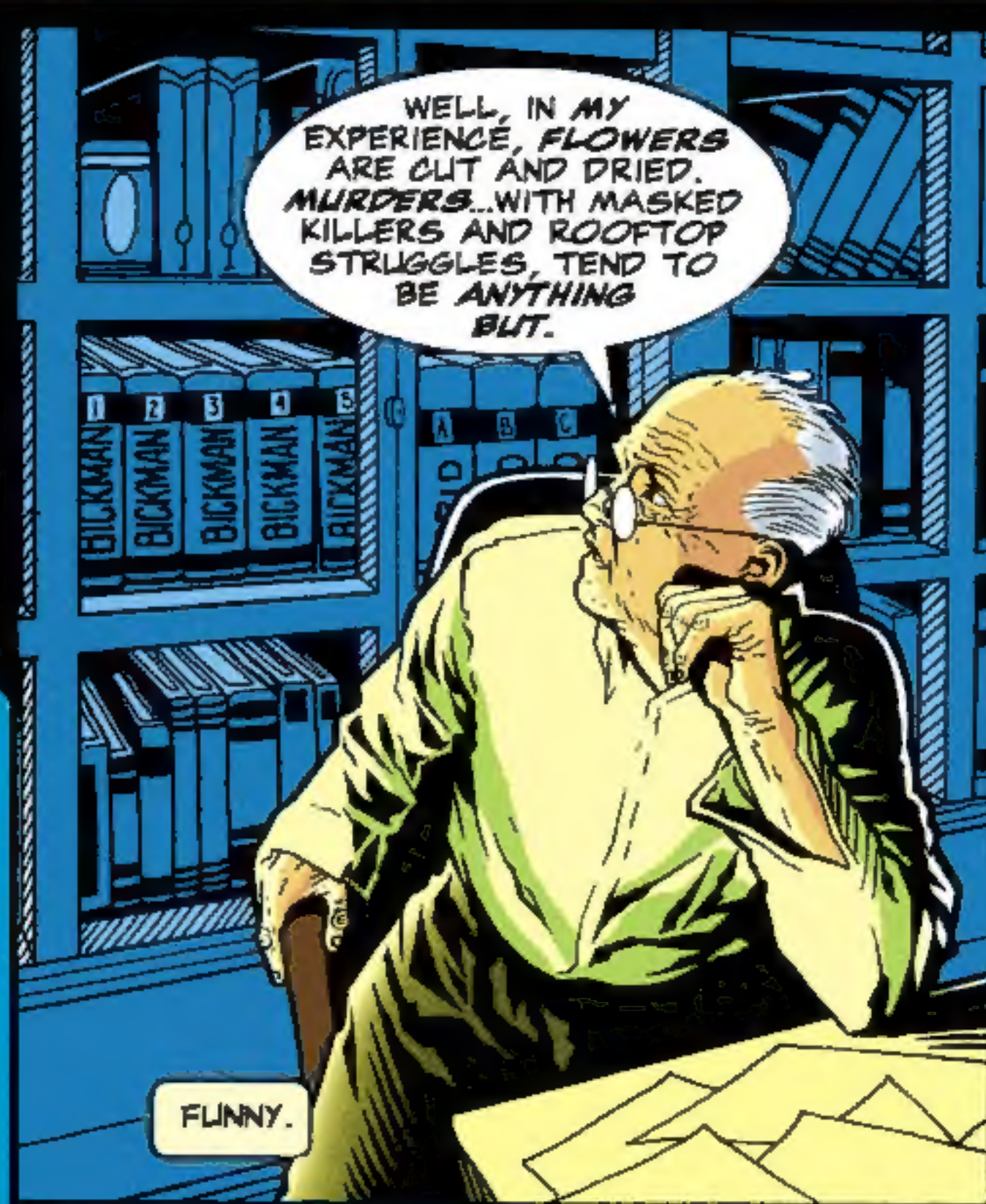
SAND
AND
STARS
PART TWO OF FOUR

autopsy re
john blair
gunshot wo
9 mm



THEY
HAVE A
SUSPECT.

CUT AND
DRIED, THE
POLICE
SAY.



WELL, IN MY
EXPERIENCE, FLOWERS
ARE CUT AND DRIED.
MURDERS...WITH MASKED
KILLERS AND ROOFTOP
STRUGGLES, TEND TO
BE ANYTHING
BUT.

FUNNY.



WHY DON'T WE
EXAMINE THE FACTS
AS WE KNOW
THEM.

IS THIS
HOW YOU USED
TO START,
WESLEY?

I
STARTED
AT THE
BEGINNING.



EACH
BEGINNING WAS
DIFFERENT FROM
THE LAST.

FUNNY. HOW WHEN I
FIRST SAW HIM HE HAD
WEAK, OLD MAN'S EYES.
PALSY. HIS SMELL...OLD.

NOW IT'S ALL GONE.
HE'S SHARP. HE'S BACK.

THE MURDERED
MAN WAS **JOHN
BLAINE**, INVESTOR.
SEMI-RETIRED. HE'D
MADE HIS MONEY IN
TINNED FISH. A COUPLE
OF YEARS AGO HE
DECIDED TO TAKE HIS
LIFE IN A DIFFERENT
DIRECTION.

AIRSHIPS.

sand and stars

PART
TWO

JAMES
ROBINSON
writer



TONY
HARRIS
penciler



WADE VON
GRAWBADGER
inker

GREG WRIGHT - colorist
CHUCK KIM - asst. editor

OAKLEY / N.J.Q. - letterers
ARCHIE GOODWIN - editor

JACK KNIGHT CREATED BY JAMES ROBINSON & TONY HARRIS



AIR-SHIPS?

THAT'S RIGHT. WITH HELIUM. WITH TODAY'S LIGHTER ALLOYS TO CONSTRUCT THE VESSEL'S FRAME.

WITH THE VERTICAL-TAKEOFF CAPABILITIES DEVELOPED FOR PLANES LIKE THE HARRIER. SUDDENLY THE AIRSHIP IS A REALISTIC MODE OF TRANSPORTATION.



REALISTIC, WESLEY?

ALL RIGHT, VIABLE, AT LEAST.

ANYWAY, THE POLICE ARRESTED BLAINE'S WIFE, HELEN. SHE SWEARS SHE'S INNOCENT, BUT THEN MOST KILLERS DO.



SHE HAD A YOUNGER LOVER.

THEY WERE OUT OF TOWN. SKIING. PLENTY OF WITNESSES. NICE ALIBI.

EXCEPT THE POLICE UNCOVERED DOCUMENTS DETAILING HOW HELEN HAD DIVERTED OVER THREE QUARTERS OF HER HUSBAND'S MONEY IN THE PAST TWO WEEKS, POSSIBLY PRIOR TO HITTING BLAINE FOR A DIVORCE.

OR SIMPLY HAVING HER HUSBAND HIT.



THERE WAS ALSO THE SUM OF A QUARTER MILLION DIVERTED TO A SWISS BANK

AND NOTES AND CORROBORATING DATA REGARDING THE HIRING OF AN ASSASSIN OF INTERNATIONAL CALIBER TO DO THE KILLING WHILE HELEN AND HER BOY-MAN WERE OFF BEING SEEN.

SO THE SWISS ACCOUNT BELONGS TO THE KILLER?

THAT'S THE WAY IT LOOKS. AT LEAST, THAT'S THE WAY THE POLICE THINK IT LOOKS. AND TO BE FAIR TO NEW YORK'S FINEST, THEY'RE NOT EXACTLY TAKING POTSHOTS IN THE DARK. THE EVIDENCE IS INDEED PRETTY DAMNING.





BUT YOU'RE NOT CONVINCED.

ALL I KNOW IS WHAT I'VE LEARNED, JACK. THAT NO MATTER HOW THINGS APPEAR, IT NEVER HURTS TO WASTE A LITTLE TIME EXAMINING THE ALTERNATIVES.



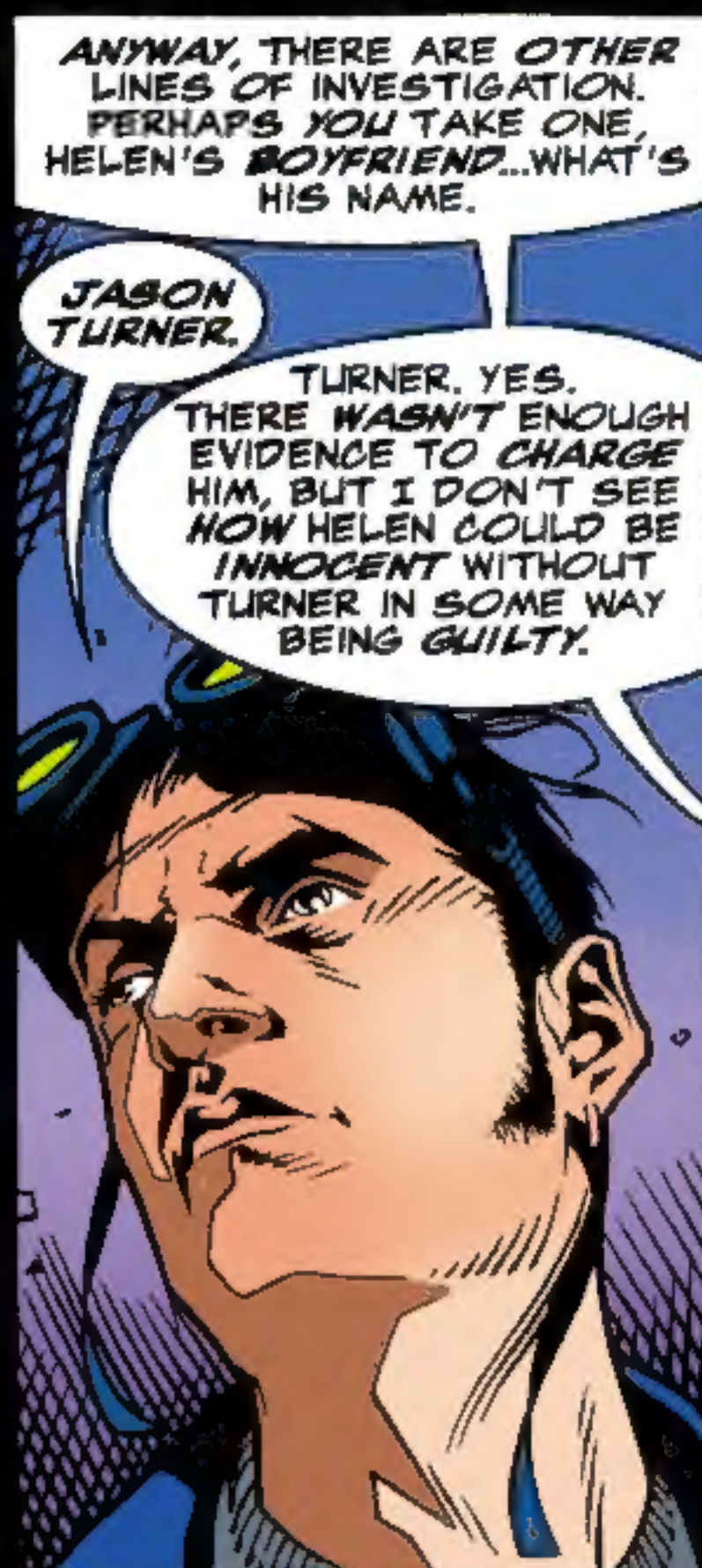
WELL, I'M YOURS, WESLEY. I'M YOUR WATSON. YOUR ARCHIE GOODWIN.

WHO?



REX STOLT'S FICTIONAL DETECTIVE, NERO WOLFE, WAS TOO FAT TO GET ABOUT. ARCHIE GOODWIN WAS HIS LEG MAN. HE NARRATED THE BOOKS, TOO.

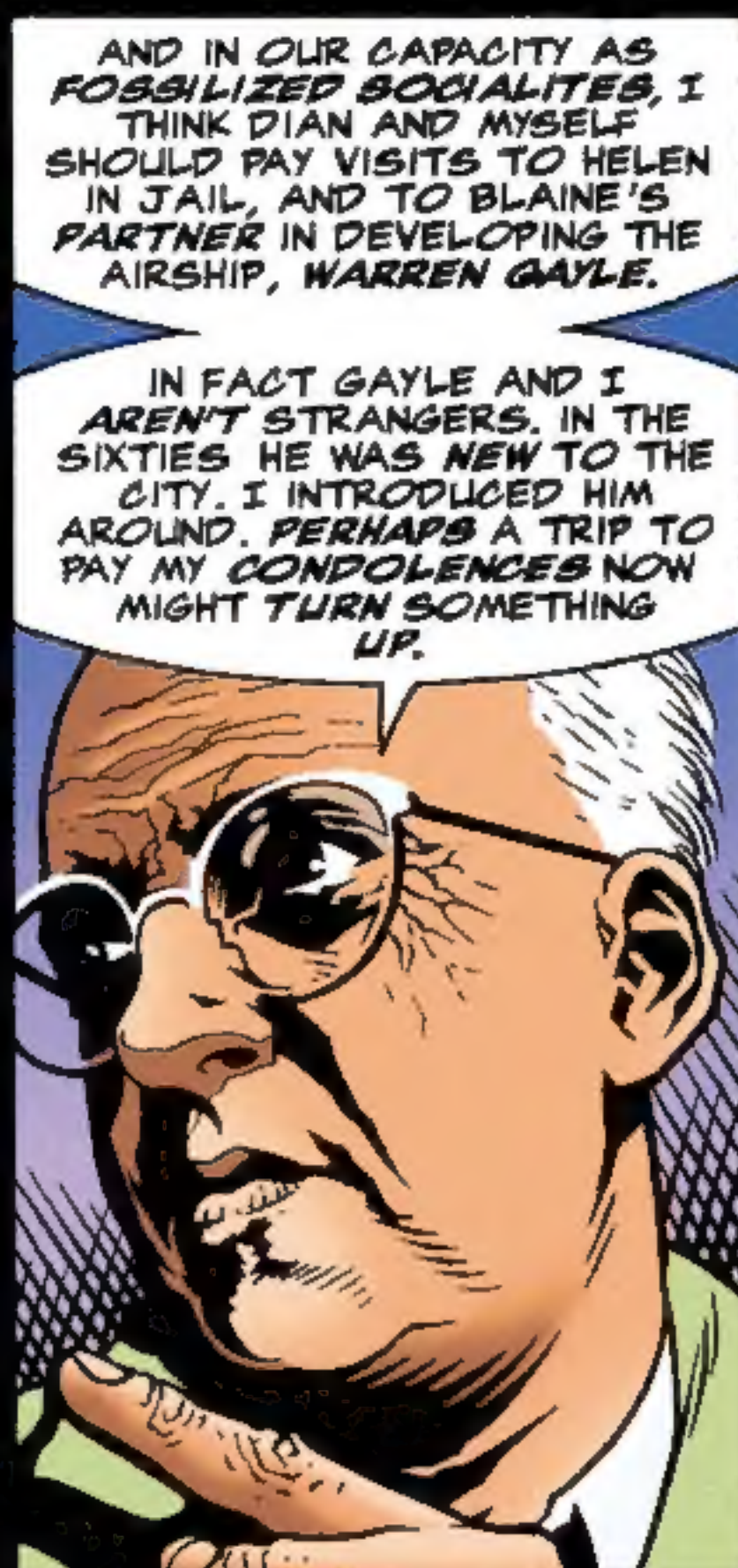
WELL, I MAY NOT BE FAT, BUT I DOUBT I'D BE TOO EFFECTIVE IN ACTION.



ANYWAY, THERE ARE OTHER LINES OF INVESTIGATION. PERHAPS YOU TAKE ONE, HELEN'S BOYFRIEND...WHAT'S HIS NAME.

JASON TURNER.

TURNER, YES. THERE WASN'T ENOUGH EVIDENCE TO CHARGE HIM, BUT I DON'T SEE HOW HELEN COULD BE INNOCENT WITHOUT TURNER IN SOME WAY BEING GUILTY.




AND IN OUR CAPACITY AS FOSSILIZED SOCIALITES, I THINK DIAN AND MYSELF SHOULD PAY VISITS TO HELEN IN JAIL, AND TO BLAINE'S PARTNER IN DEVELOPING THE AIRSHIP, WARREN GAYLE.

IN FACT GAYLE AND I AREN'T STRANGERS. IN THE SIXTIES HE WAS NEW TO THE CITY. I INTRODUCED HIM AROUND. PERHAPS A TRIP TO PAY MY CONDOLENCES NOW MIGHT TURN SOMETHING UP.




FOUR HOURS SHOULD BE ENOUGH TIME.


WE'LL SEE YOU THEN, JACK.



HAMLET'S
GRAVEDIGGER
SAID IT.



THAT HIS WORK
BEGAN THE DAY
HAMLET WAS BORN.



THAT THE
MOMENT
WE'RE BORN WE
BEGIN DYING.





OLD ACTORS. MOVIES SHOW THEM YOUNG. YOUNG. SHARP. COOL. THEY GROW OLD. THEY LOSE EVERYTHING THEY HAD. THEY GROW WEAK.

SOMETIMES I THINK JAMES DEAN DID IT RIGHT. MAKE THREE GREAT MOVIES THEN SPLIT ON BEAUTIFUL WHEELS. THE WORLD NEVER FORGETS YOU.

LINGER ON, GET PUSHED AROUND IN A WHEELCHAIR LIKE CAGNEY, GET ALZHEIMER'S LIKE RITA HAYWORTH, AND THE WORLD TRIES TO FORGET YOU. IT'S JUST TOO PAINFUL OTHERWISE.

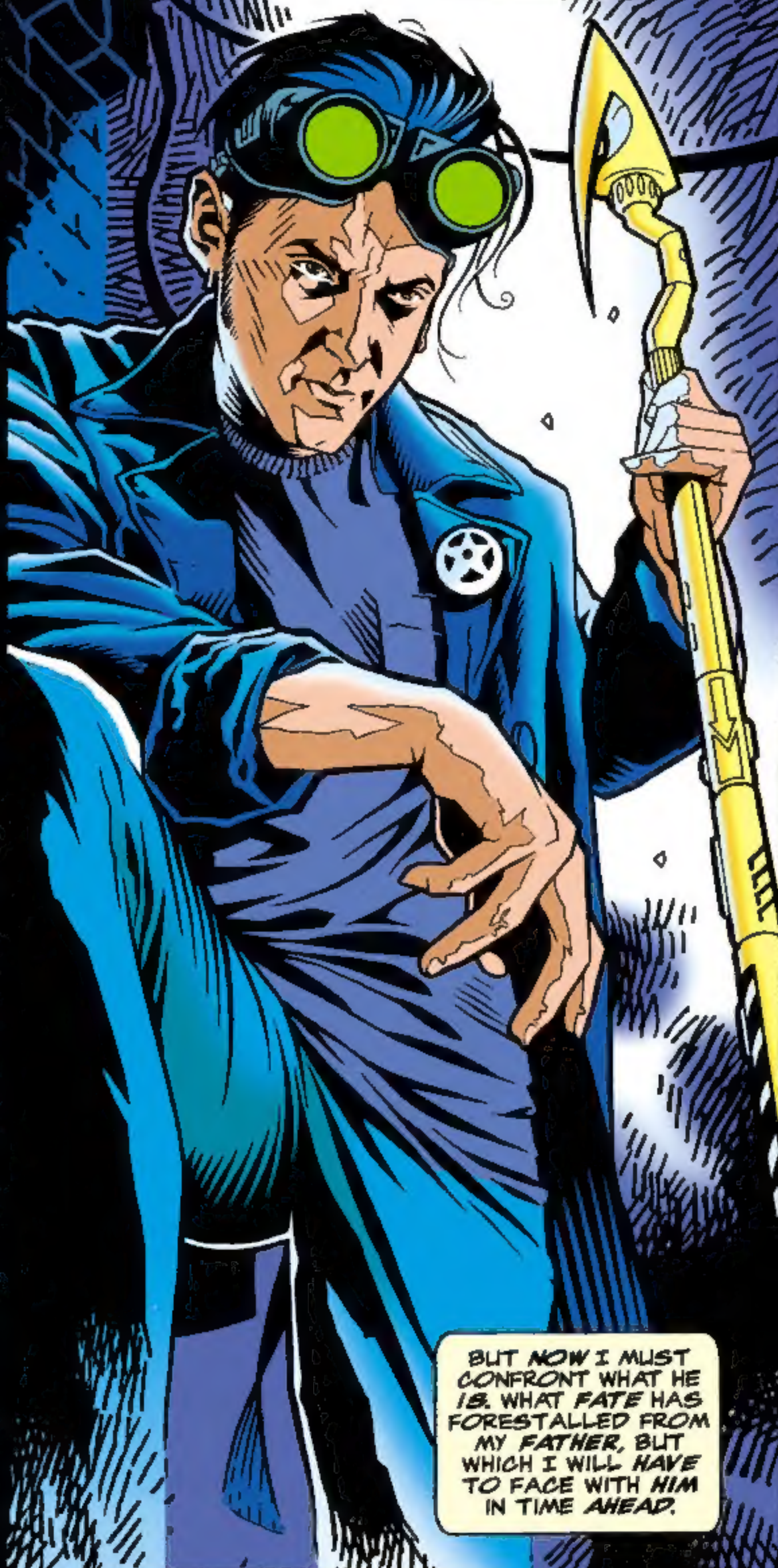
I DON'T WANT THAT. TO BE THE HERO EQUIVALENT OF THAT. TO BECOME WESLEY DODDS. OR JONATHAN LAW. OR DARRELL DANE.

SOME OLD FORGOTTEN SOUL.

I FEAR THAT. BECOMING SUCH AS THEY. MORE THAN ANY ROOFTOP SKYLINE DEMON OR PERIL IN THE SKY.

I ADMIRE DODDS. I DO.

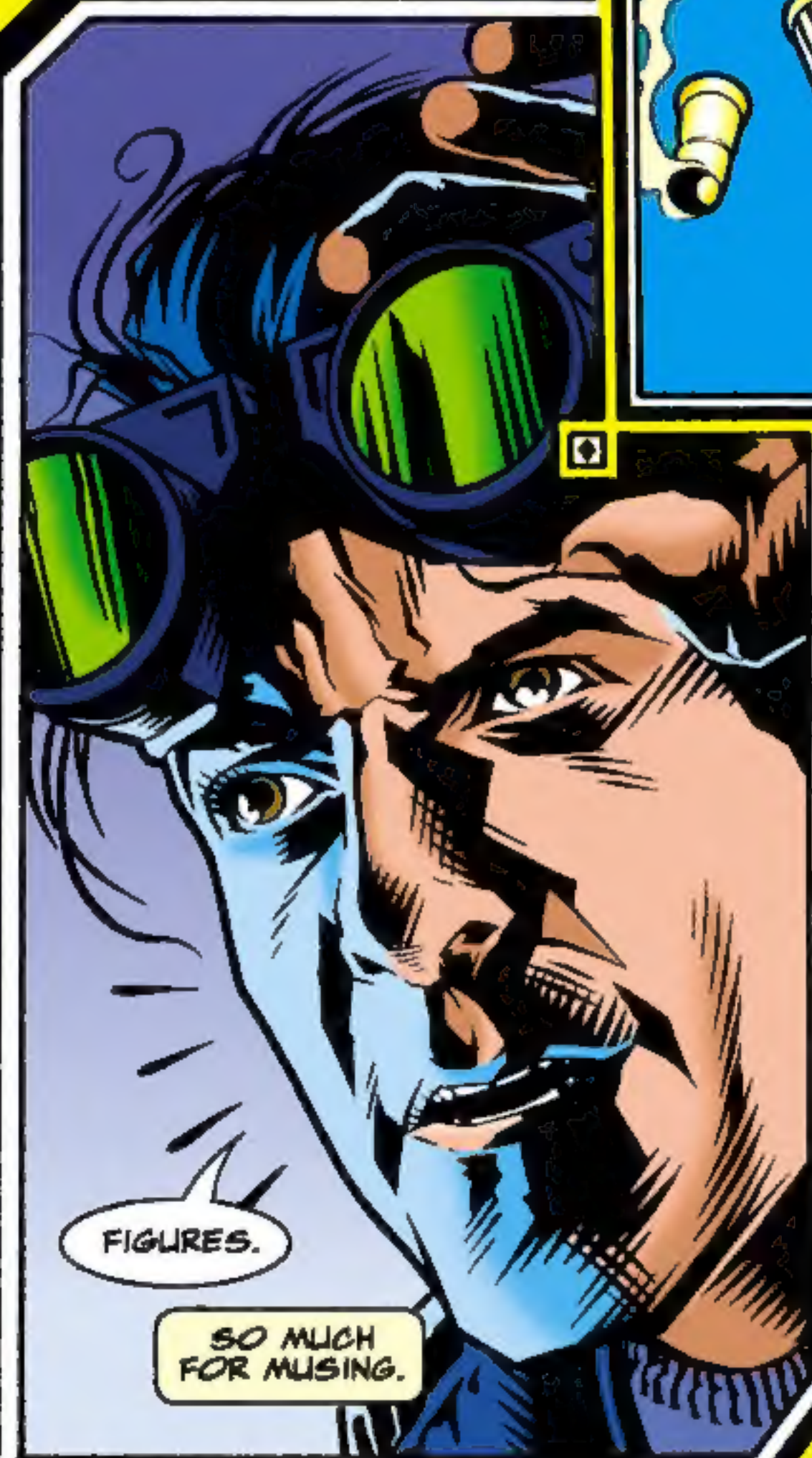
EVERYTHING HE WAS.



BUT NOW I MUST CONFRONT WHAT HE IS. WHAT FATE HAS FORESTALLED FROM MY FATHER, BUT WHICH I WILL HAVE TO FACE WITH HIM IN TIME AHEAD.

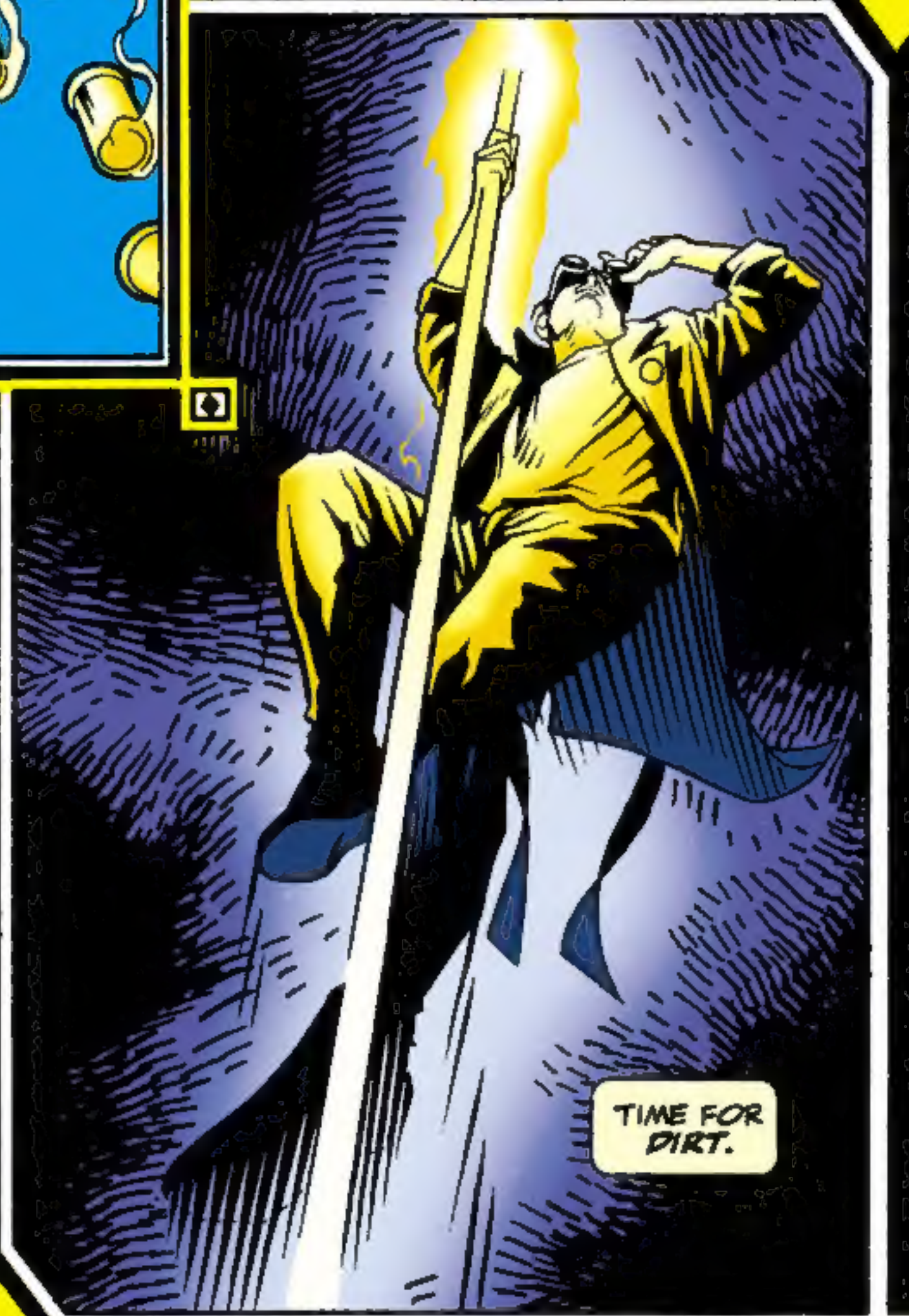
THEN LATER STILL, IF I SURVIVE THE BITTER SWEEP OF THE DEALER, I MUST ONE DAY FACE THE OLD MAN WHO WILL LOOK OUT FROM THE MIRROR.

AND I HOPE, AT LEAST, THAT OLD MAN HAS A YOUNG HEART.



FIGURES.

SO MUCH
FOR Musing.



TIME FOR
DIRT.

YOU!

NO
MORE!
IT'S
OVER!

OH,
YEAH!

BUDDA

BUDDA

BUDDA

CHIK

CHAK

CHIK

JEEZ!

FASTER
THAN--

CHAC

TNKK

TNKK

CHIK



FASTER THAN
I THOUGHT.

--THAN
ME.



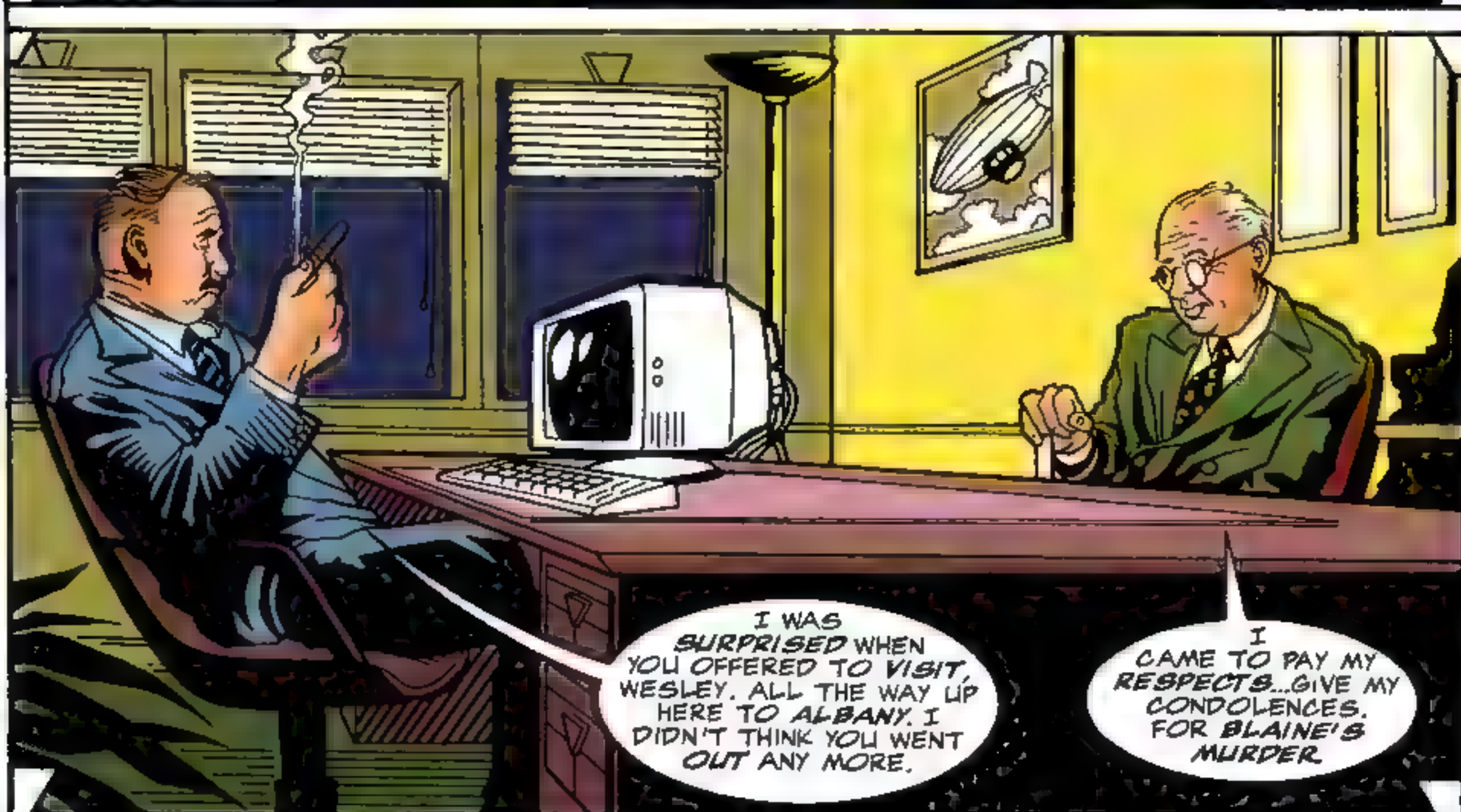
AND I'LL GIVE HIM 9.9
ON THAT ESCAPE.

SMOOTHER THAN
LAST TIME, AND
THAT'S SAYING
SOMETHING.



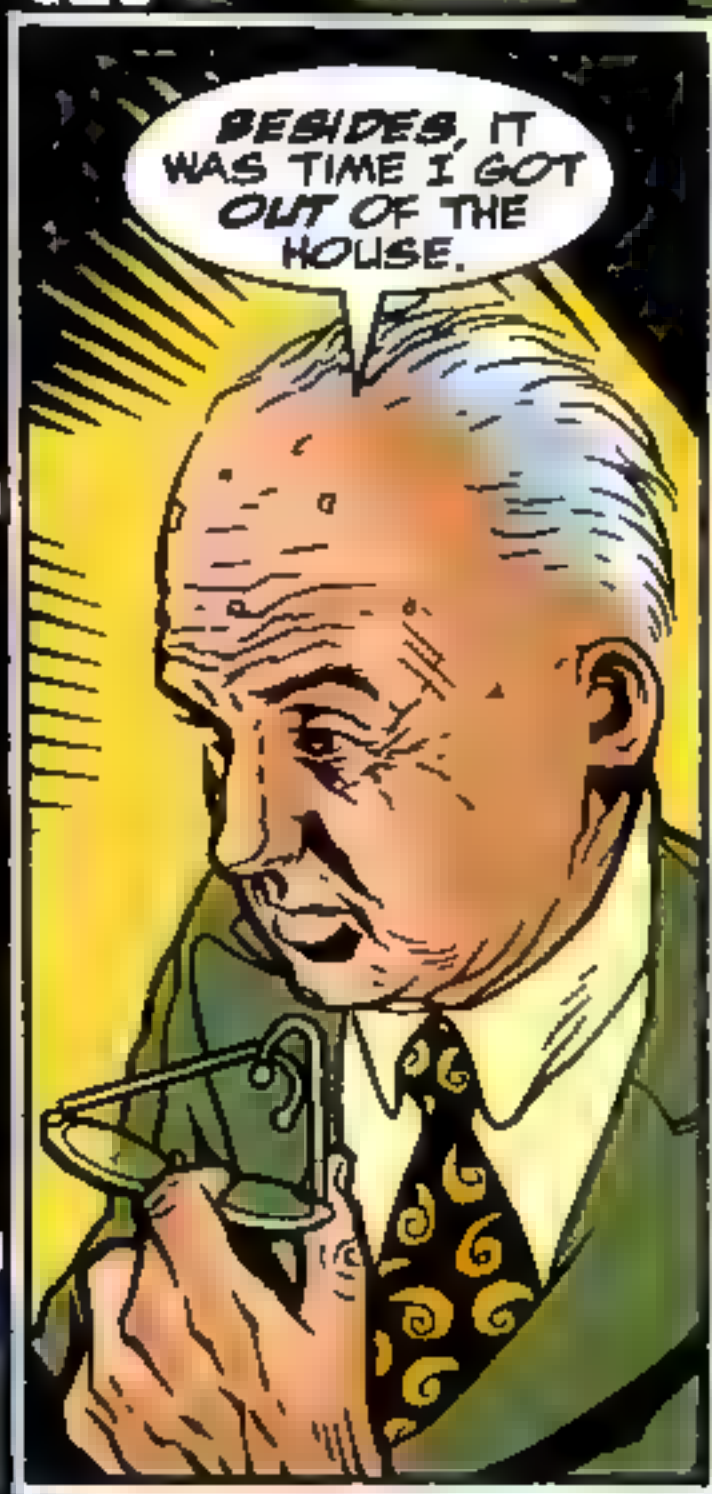
GUESS I
SHOULD
EXAMINE THE
DAMAGE.

MAN, I HATE
THE SIGHT OF
BLOOD.

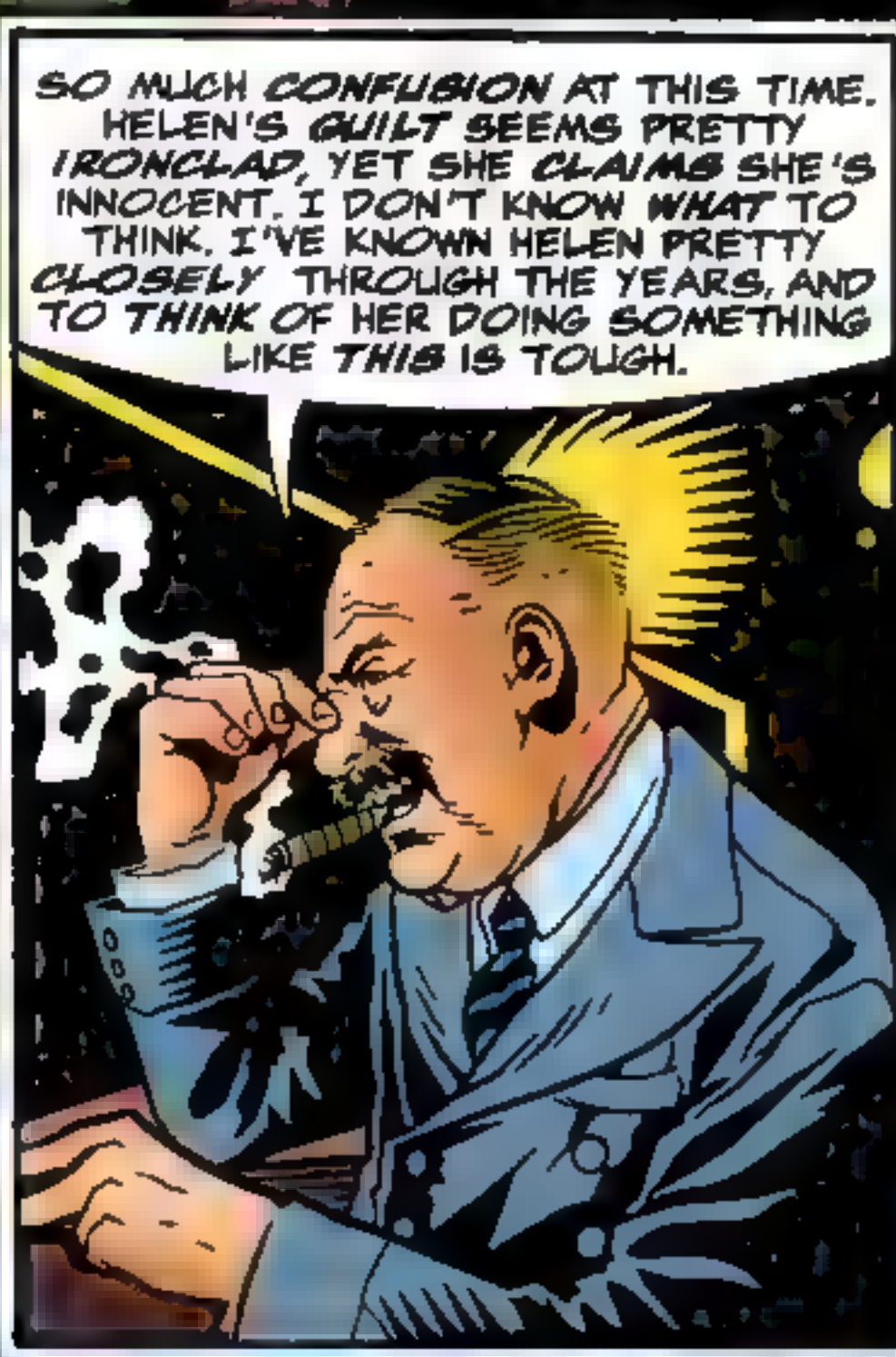


I WAS SURPRISED WHEN YOU OFFERED TO VISIT WESLEY. ALL THE WAY UP HERE TO ALBANY. I DIDN'T THINK YOU WENT OUT ANY MORE.

I CAME TO PAY MY RESPECTS...GIVE MY CONDOLENCES. FOR BLAINE'S MURDER.



BESIDES, IT WAS TIME I GOT OUT OF THE HOUSE.

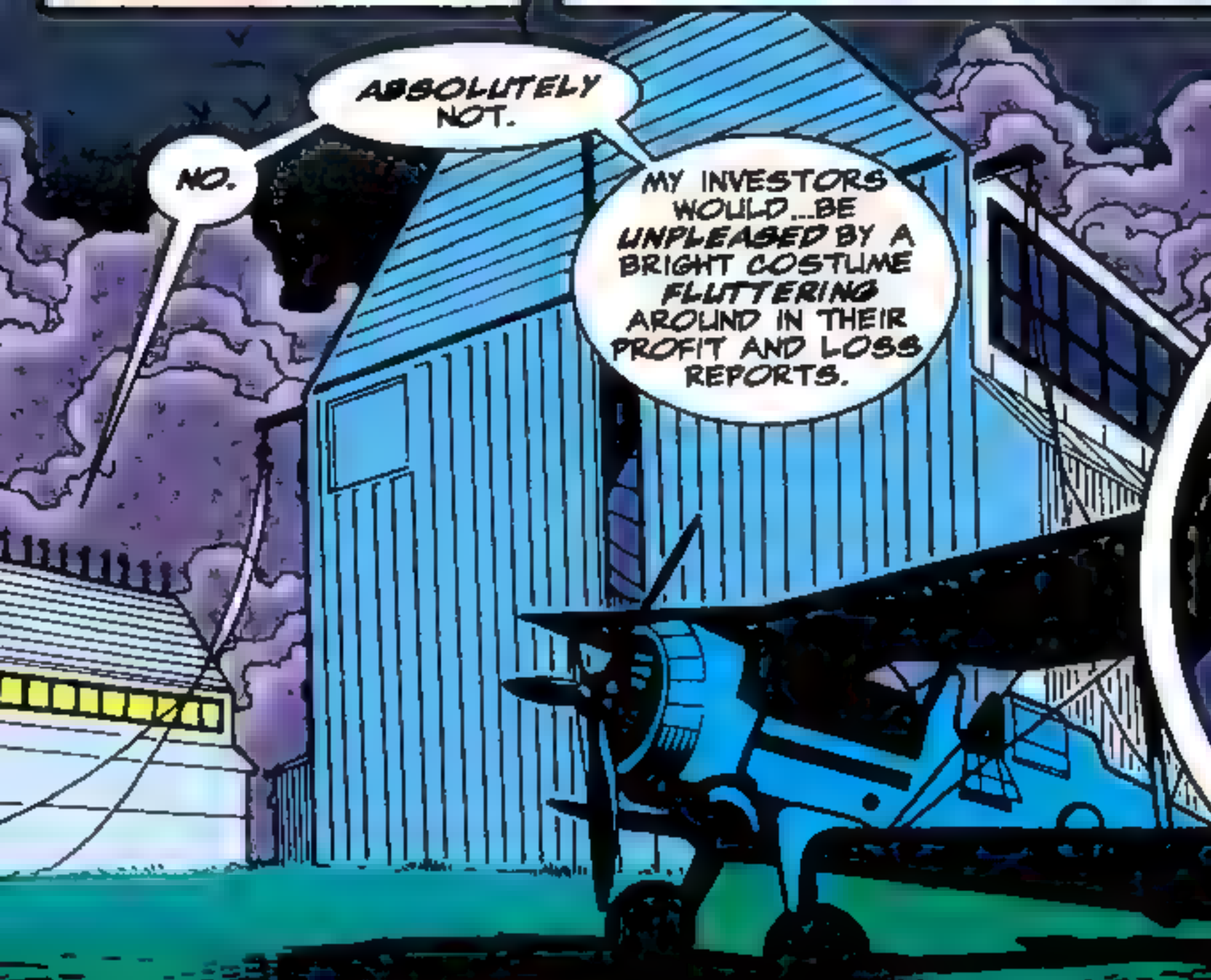


SO MUCH CONFUSION AT THIS TIME. HELEN'S GUILT SEEMS PRETTY IRONCLAD, YET SHE CLAIMS SHE'S INNOCENT. I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO THINK. I'VE KNOWN HELEN PRETTY CLOSELY THROUGH THE YEARS, AND TO THINK OF HER DOING SOMETHING LIKE THIS IS TOUGH.



I COME WITH AN OFFER. I KNOW A YOUNG MAN. A... err...A SUPERHERO.

HE'LL DO ME A FAVOR IF I WISH IT. IF YOU'D LIKE THAT FAVOR TO BE INVESTIGATING JOHN'S KILLING, I'M SURE I COULD PERSUADE HIM.



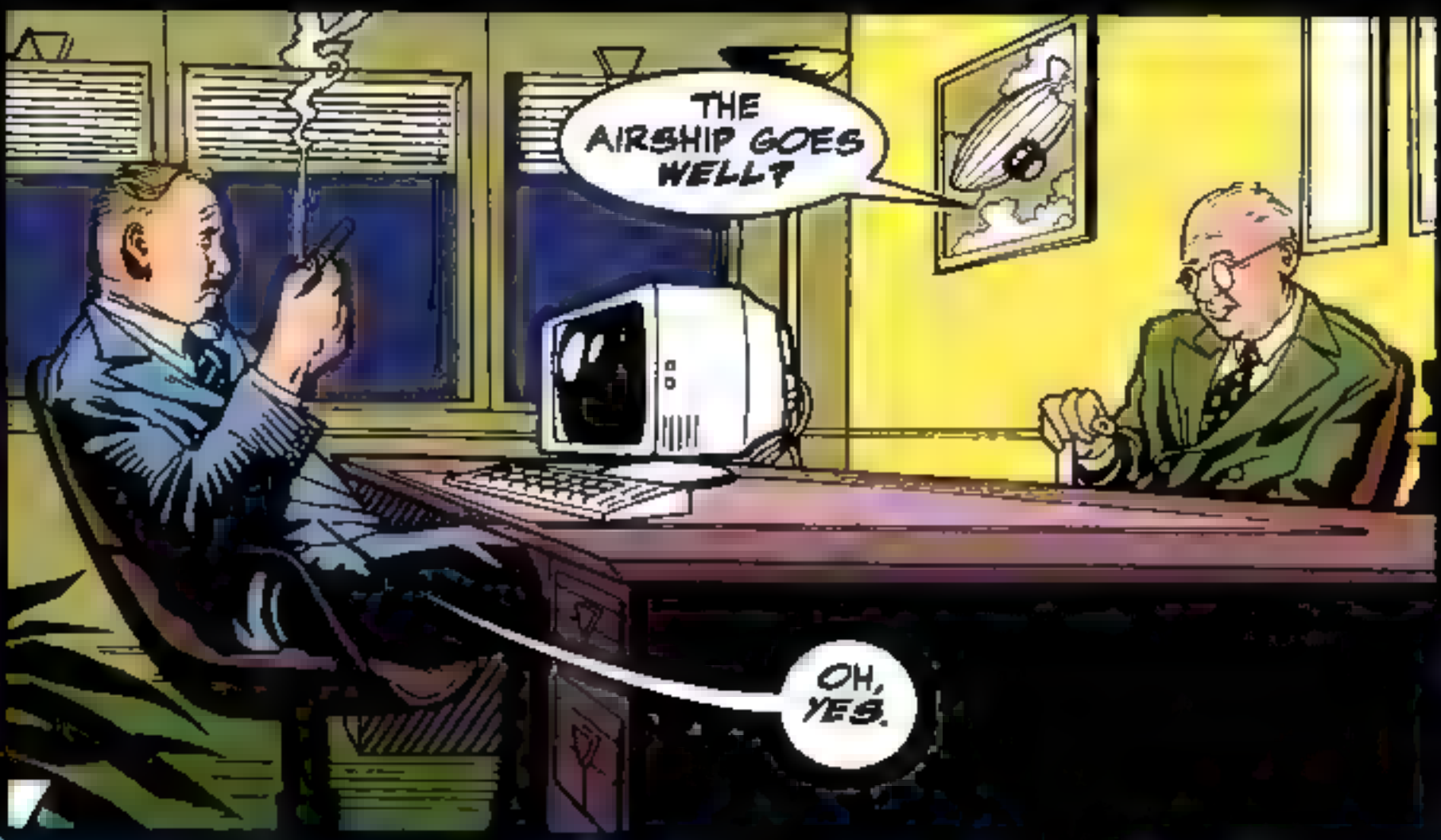
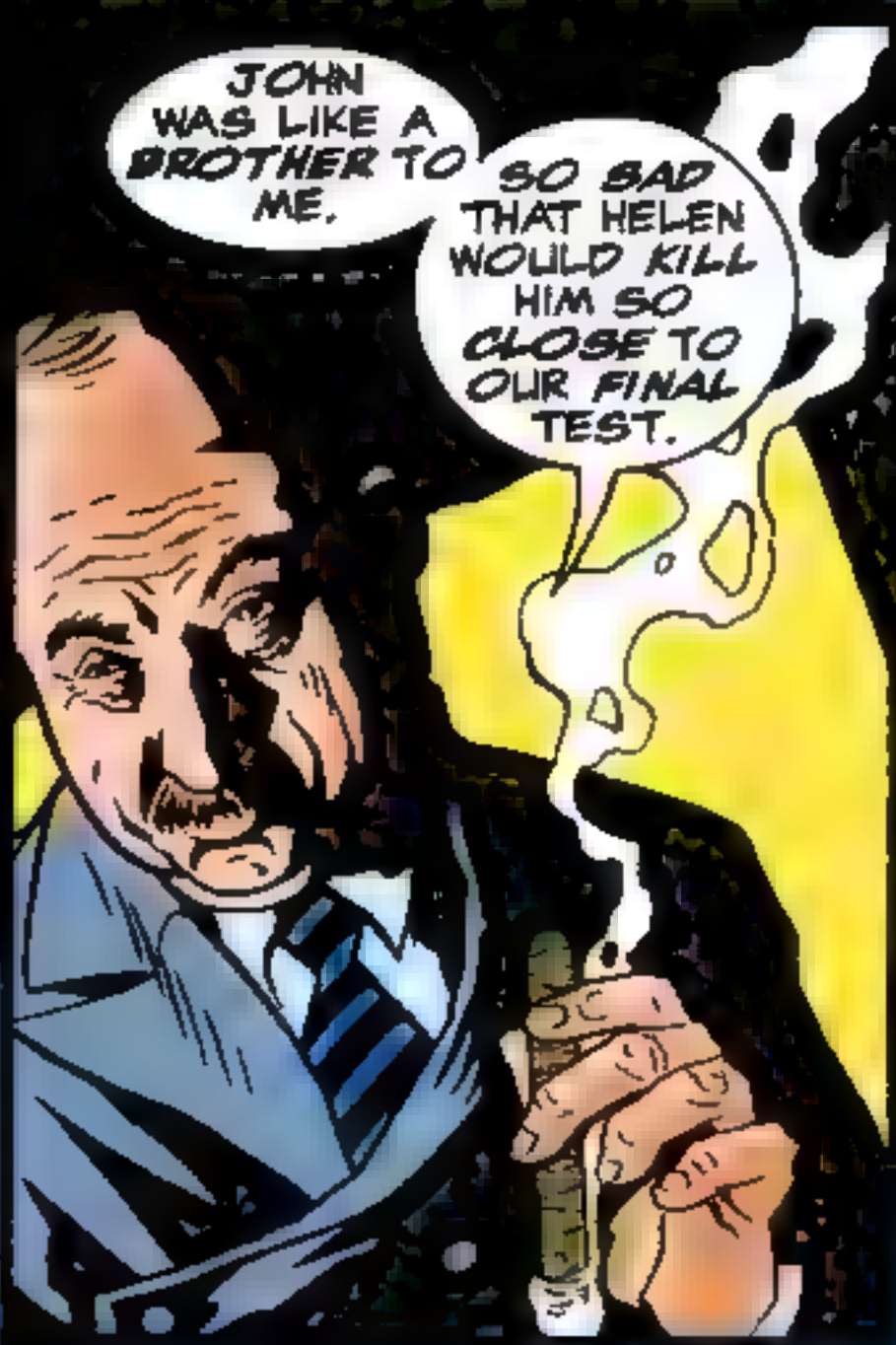
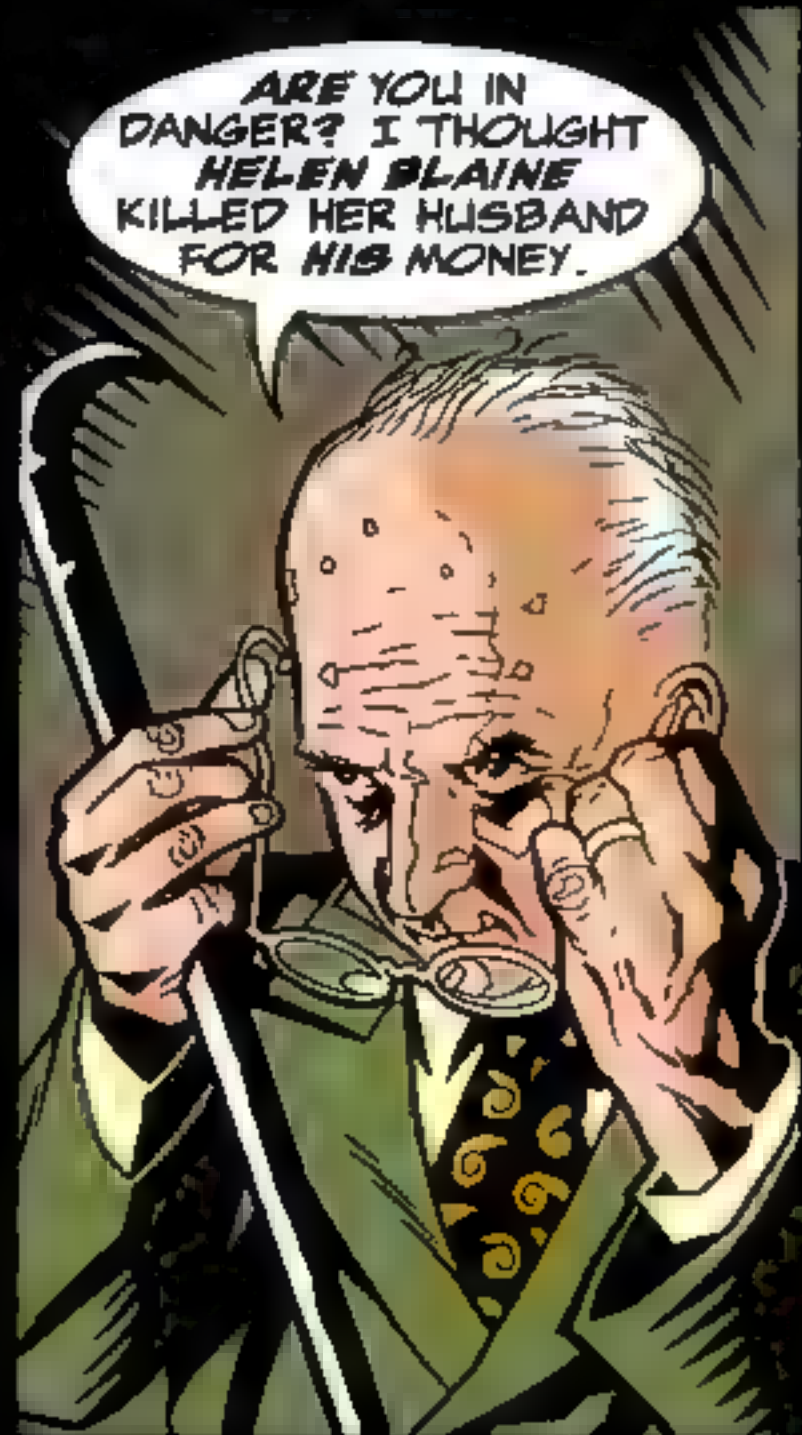
NO.

ABSOLUTELY NOT.

MY INVESTORS WOULD...BE UNPLEASED BY A BRIGHT COSTUME FLUTTERING AROUND IN THEIR PROFIT AND LOSS REPORTS.



ANYWAY, I BROUGHT IN SECURITY. HI-TECH. ARMORED. IF I'M IN DANGER, THEY'LL PROTECT ME.





THE POLICE WILL
COME. SOON, TOO. I
CAN HEAR THE SIRENS.



THIS GUY'S DEFINITELY
ON HIS WAY TO
BOOT HILL.



I MUST
BE QUICK.

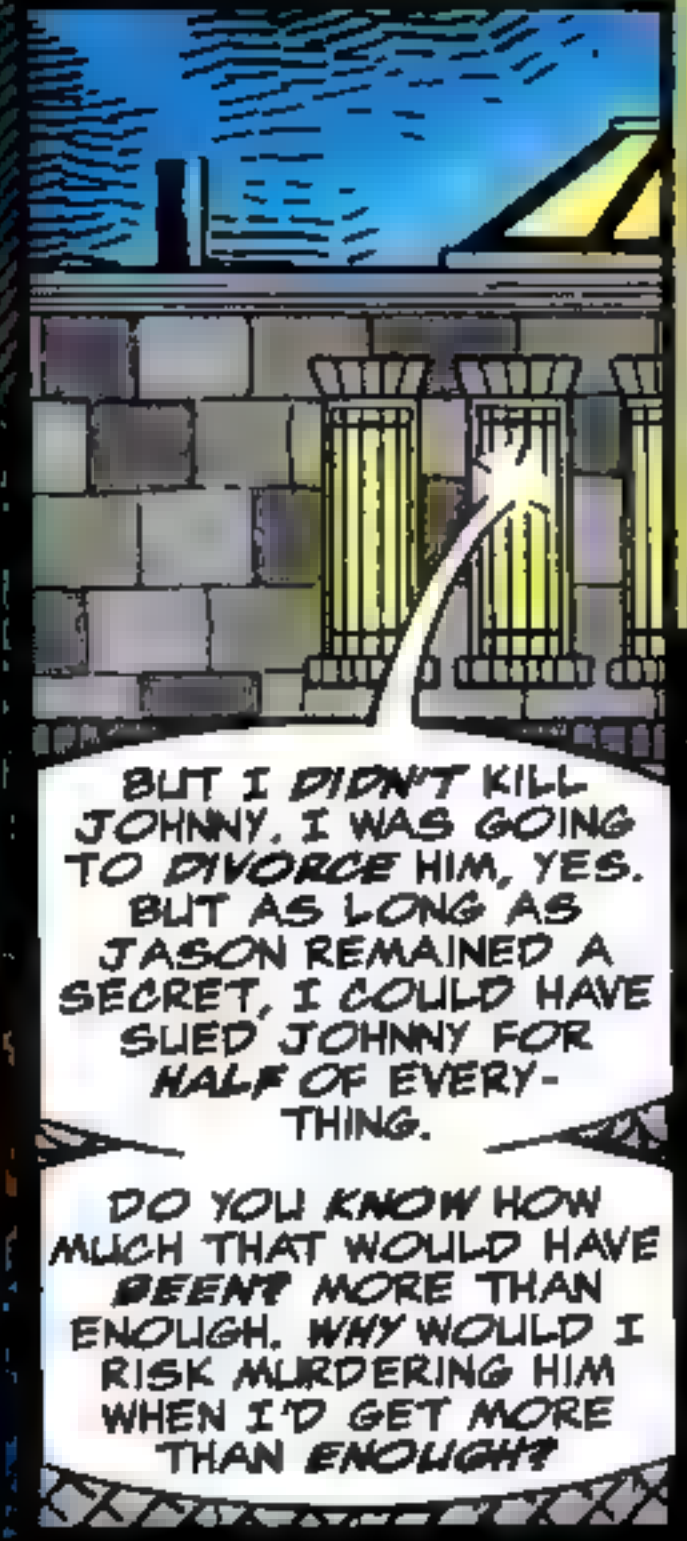




UNFORTUNATELY, THE INVESTIGATING OFFICER BELIEVED IN DOING THINGS BY THE BOOK. EVERY WARRANT THAT COULD BE GOTTEN WAS, SO ALL THE USUAL SLIPPERINESS LAWYERS USE TO MAKE THE EVIDENCE INADMISSIBLE IS TO NO AVAIL.

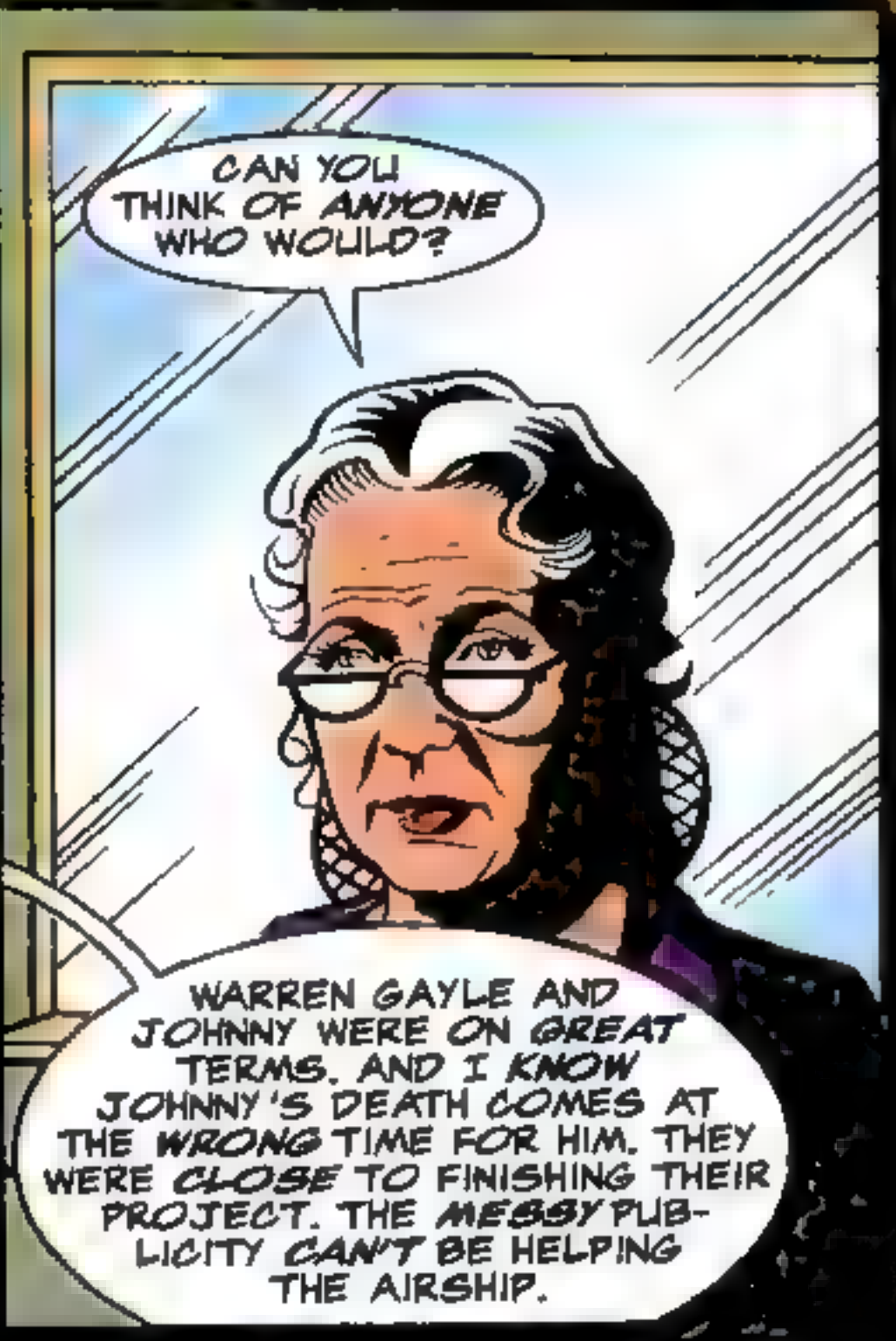


I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY...TO DO. MY LAWYERS TELL ME THAT THEY HAVE NO DEFENSE STRATEGY. I CAN'T SAY I BLAME THEM.



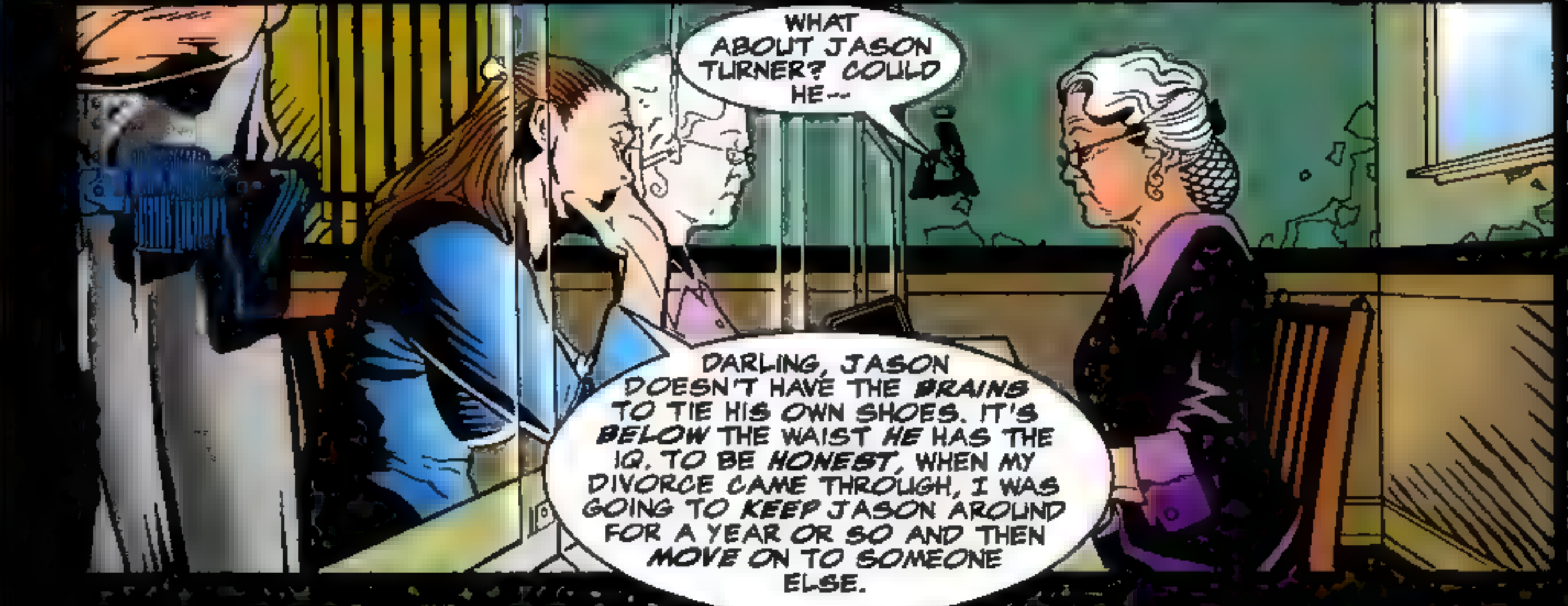
BUT I DIDN'T KILL JOHNNY. I WAS GOING TO DIVORCE HIM, YES. BUT AS LONG AS JASON REMAINED A SECRET, I COULD HAVE SLIED JOHNNY FOR HALF OF EVERY-THING.

DO YOU KNOW HOW MUCH THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN MORE THAN ENOUGH. WHY WOULD I RISK MURDERING HIM WHEN I'D GET MORE THAN ENOUGH?



CAN YOU THINK OF ANYONE WHO WOULD?

WARREN GAYLE AND JOHNNY WERE ON GREAT TERMS. AND I KNOW JOHNNY'S DEATH COMES AT THE WRONG TIME FOR HIM. THEY WERE CLOSE TO FINISHING THEIR PROJECT. THE MESSY PUBLICITY CAN'T BE HELPING THE AIRSHIP.



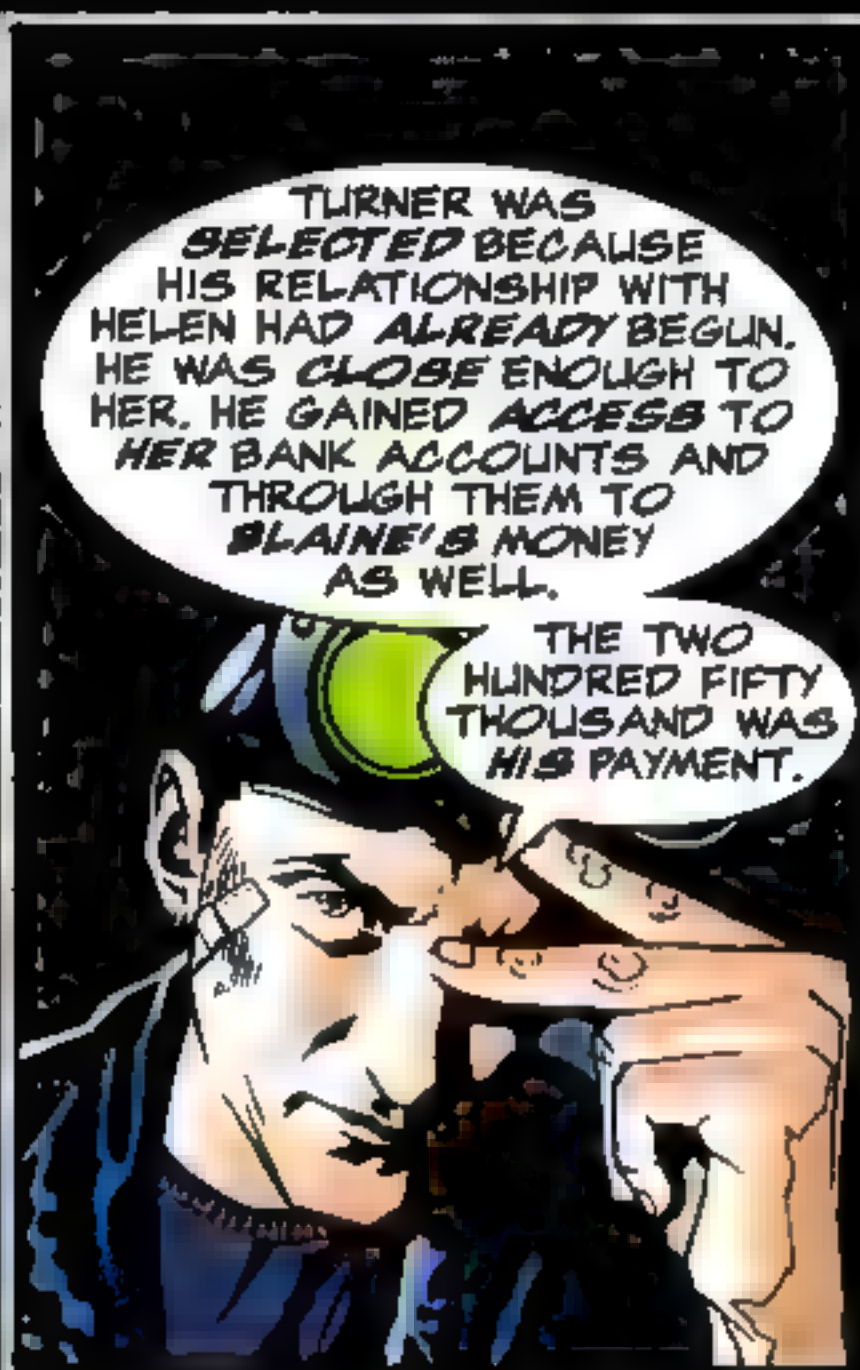
WHAT ABOUT JASON TURNER? COULD HE--

DARLING, JASON DOESN'T HAVE THE BRAINS TO TIE HIS OWN SHOES. IT'S BELOW THE WAIST HE HAS THE IQ. TO BE HONEST, WHEN MY DIVORCE CAME THROUGH, I WAS GOING TO KEEP JASON AROUND FOR A YEAR OR SO AND THEN MOVE ON TO SOMEONE ELSE.



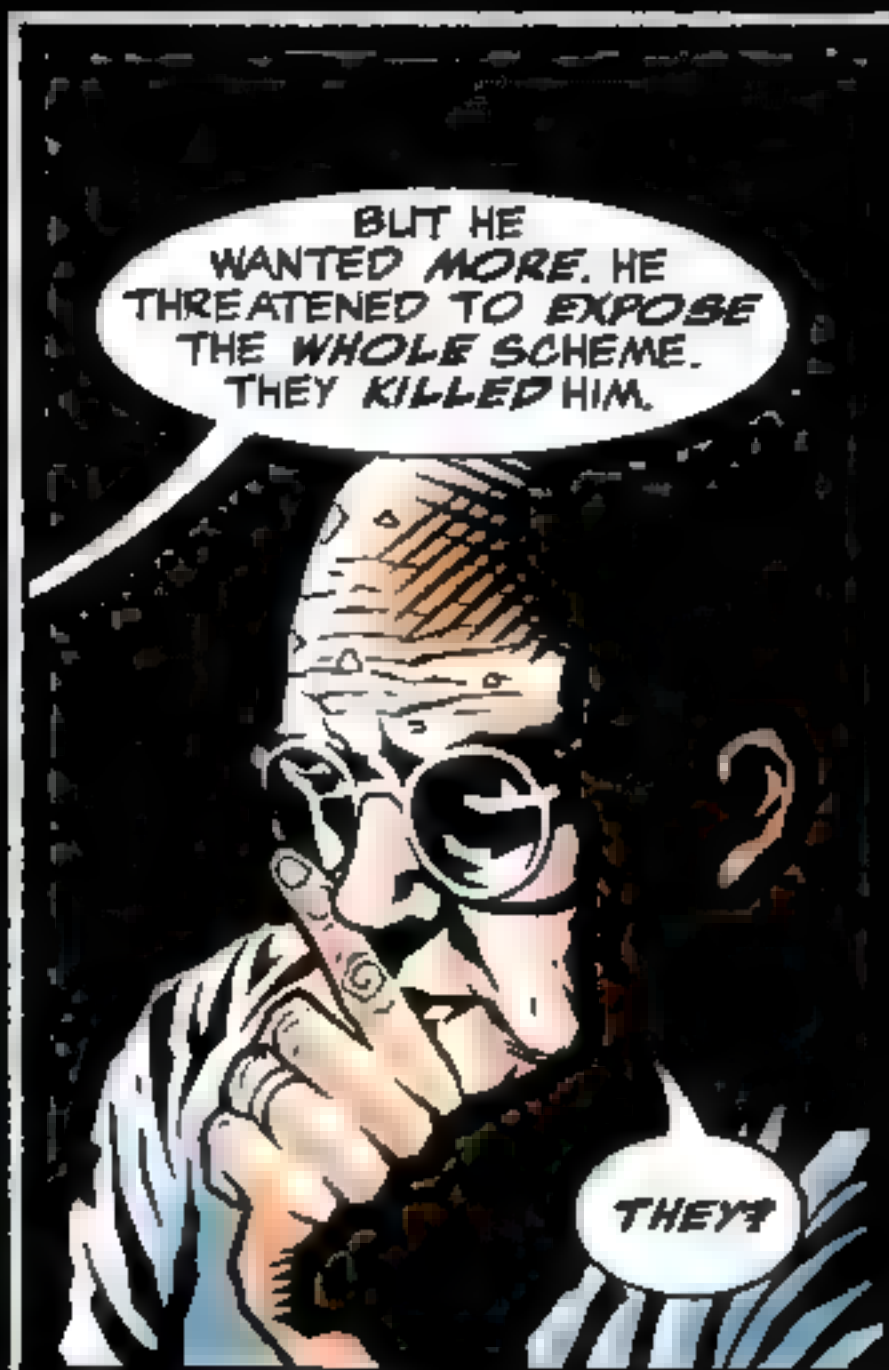
JASON
TURNER KEPT A
COMPUTER
DIARY.

HE WAS
SHOWN HOW TO
DIVERT THE FUNDS
FROM JOHN BLAINE'S
ACCOUNT.



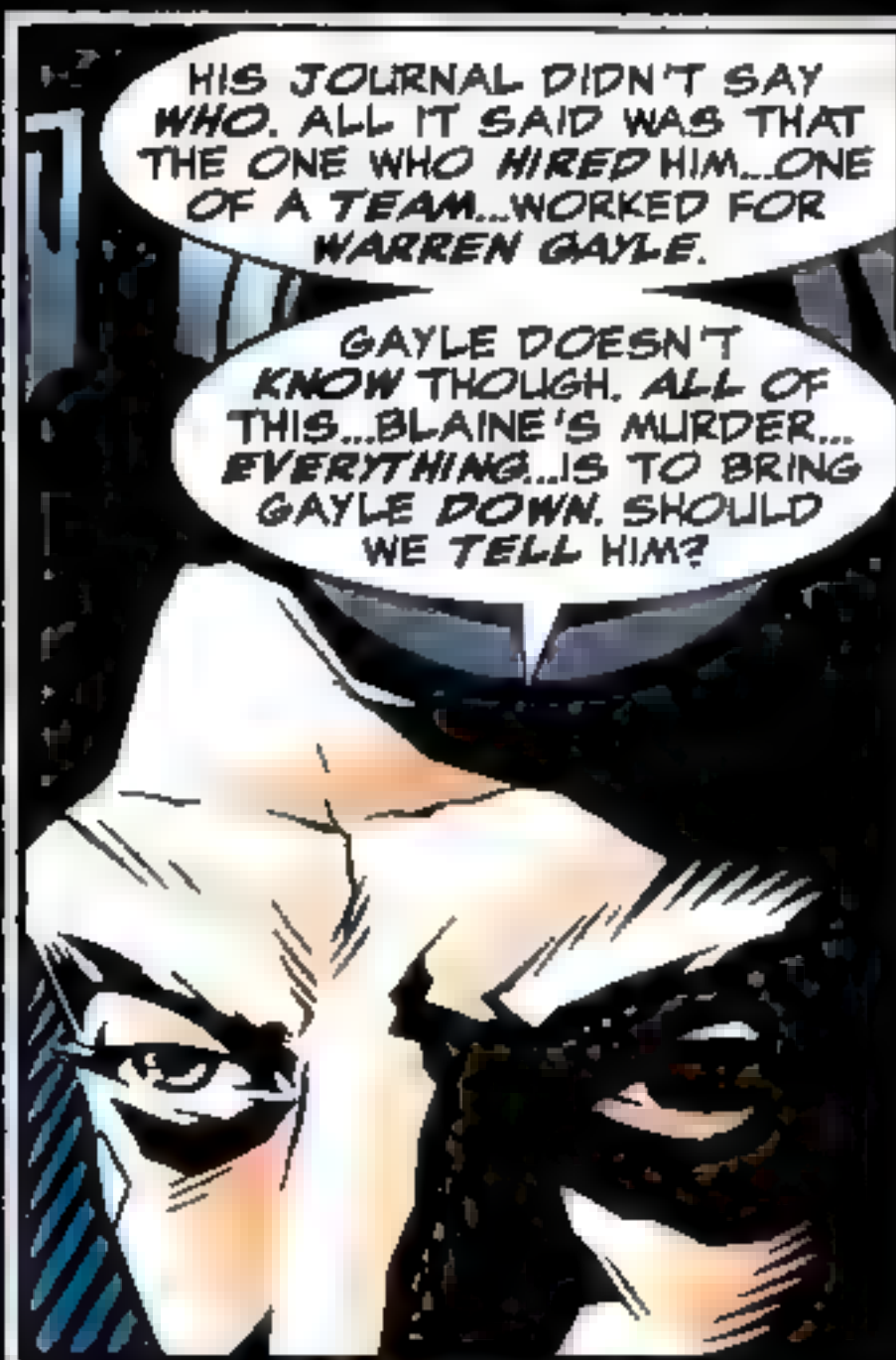
TURNER WAS
SELECTED BECAUSE
HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH
HELEN HAD ALREADY BEGUN.
HE WAS CLOSE ENOUGH TO
HER. HE GAINED ACCESS TO
HER BANK ACCOUNTS AND
THROUGH THEM TO
BLAINE'S MONEY
AS WELL.

THE TWO
HUNDRED FIFTY
THOUSAND WAS
HIS PAYMENT.



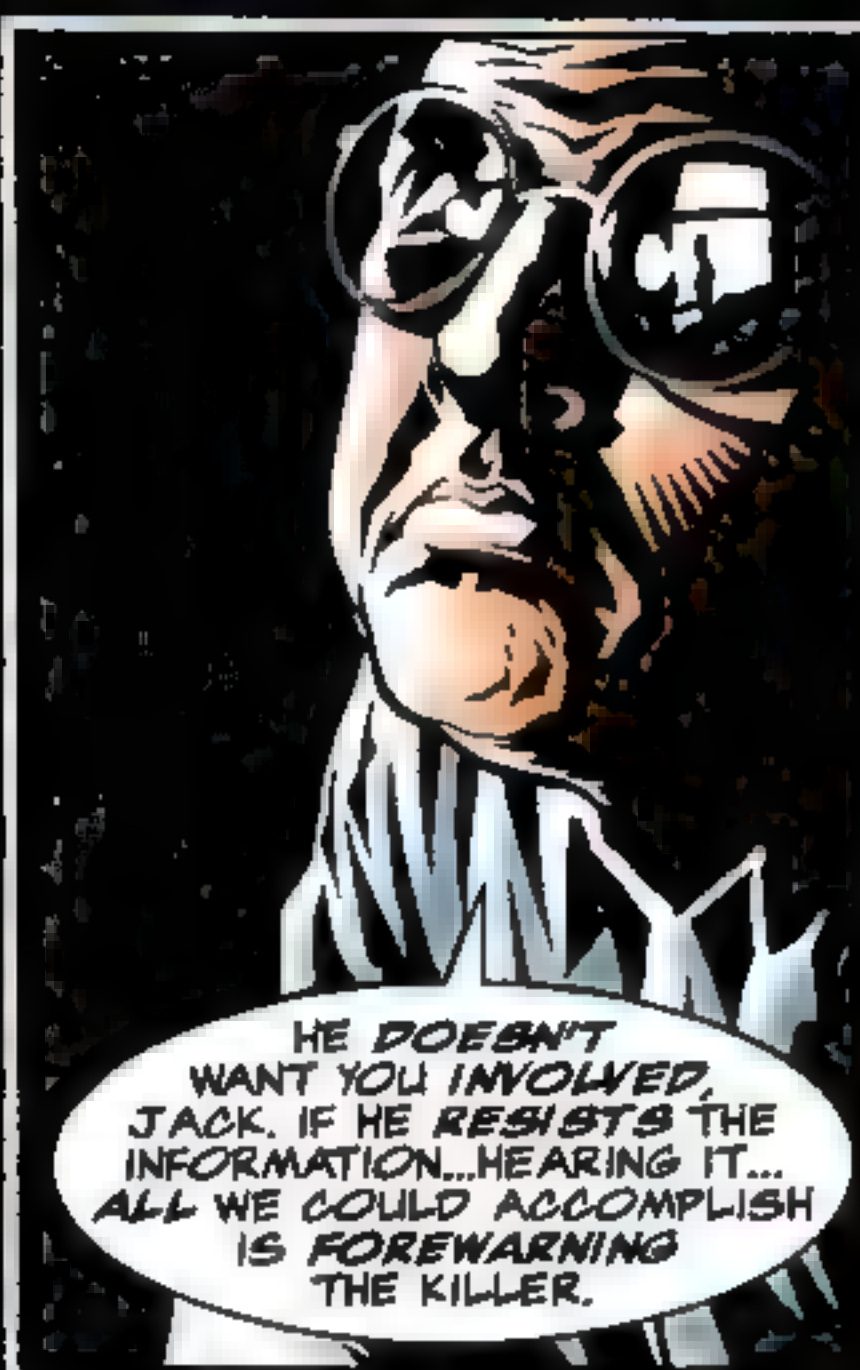
BUT HE
WANTED MORE. HE
THREATENED TO EXPOSE
THE WHOLE SCHEME.
THEY KILLED HIM.

THEY?

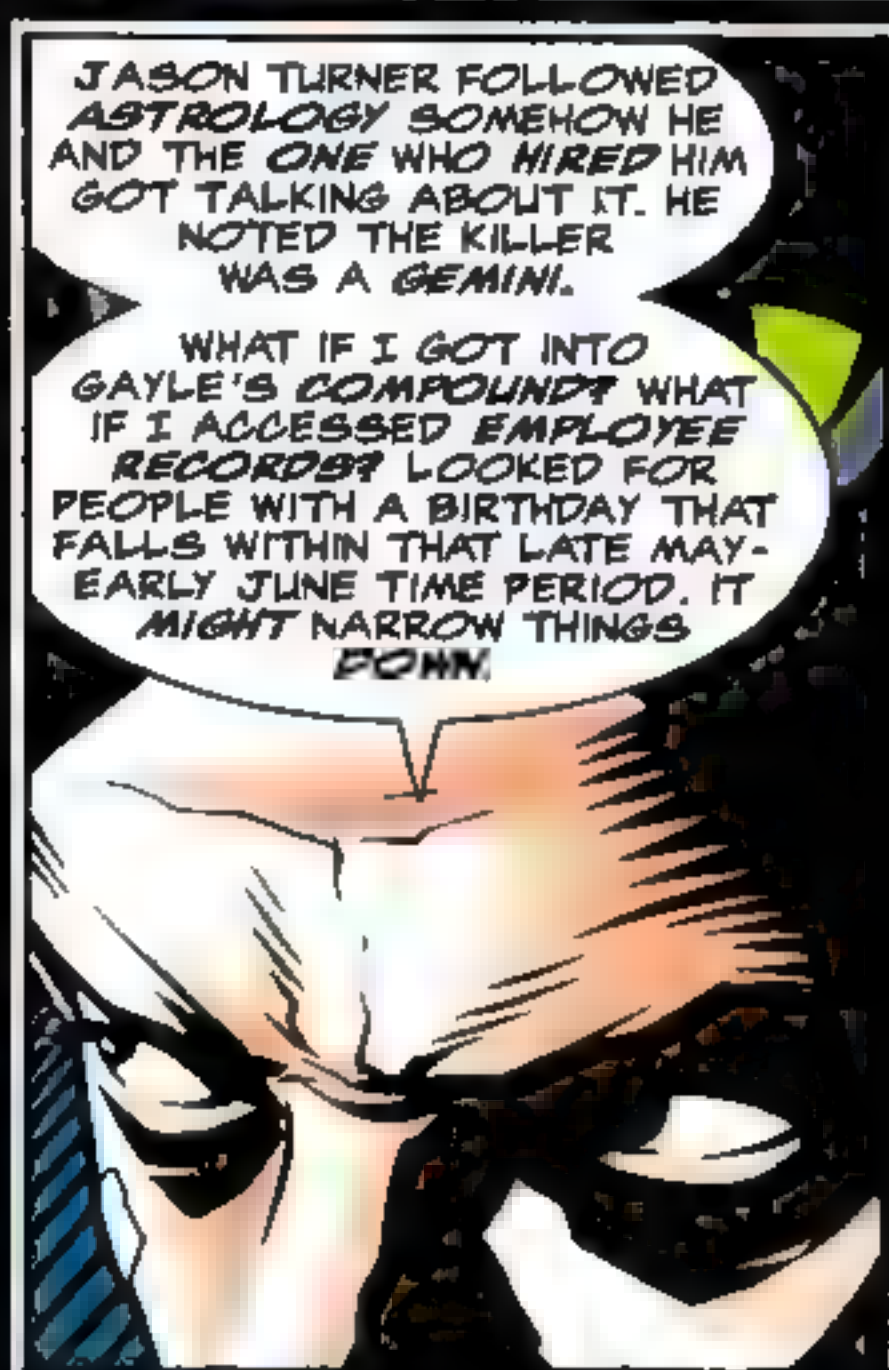


HIS JOURNAL DIDN'T SAY
WHO. ALL IT SAID WAS THAT
THE ONE WHO HIRED HIM...ONE
OF A TEAM...WORKED FOR
WARREN GAYLE.

GAYLE DOESN'T
KNOW THOUGH. ALL OF
THIS...BLAINE'S MURDER...
EVERYTHING...IS TO BRING
GAYLE DOWN. SHOULD
WE TELL HIM?



HE DOESN'T
WANT YOU INVOLVED,
JACK. IF HE RESISTS THE
INFORMATION...HEARING IT...
ALL WE COULD ACCOMPLISH
IS FOREWARNING
THE KILLER.



JASON TURNER FOLLOWED
ASTROLOGY SOMEHOW HE
AND THE ONE WHO HIRED HIM
GOT TALKING ABOUT IT. HE
NOTED THE KILLER
WAS A GEMINI.

WHAT IF I GOT INTO
GAYLE'S COMPOUND? WHAT
IF I ACCESSED EMPLOYEE
RECORDS? LOOKED FOR
PEOPLE WITH A BIRTHDAY THAT
FALLS WITHIN THAT LATE MAY-
EARLY JUNE TIME PERIOD. IT
MIGHT NARROW THINGS
DOWN.



WELL, YOU CERTAINLY MIGHT
FIND SOMETHING OUT. GAYLE
KNOWS MORE THAN HE LETS
ON. HE HIRED PROTECTION
WHEN NOTHING IMPLIES HE
WAS EVEN IN DANGER.

BUT THE GAYLE
COMPOUND DEFENSES ARE
PRETTY ADVANCED. ARE YOU
PREPARED FOR THAT?

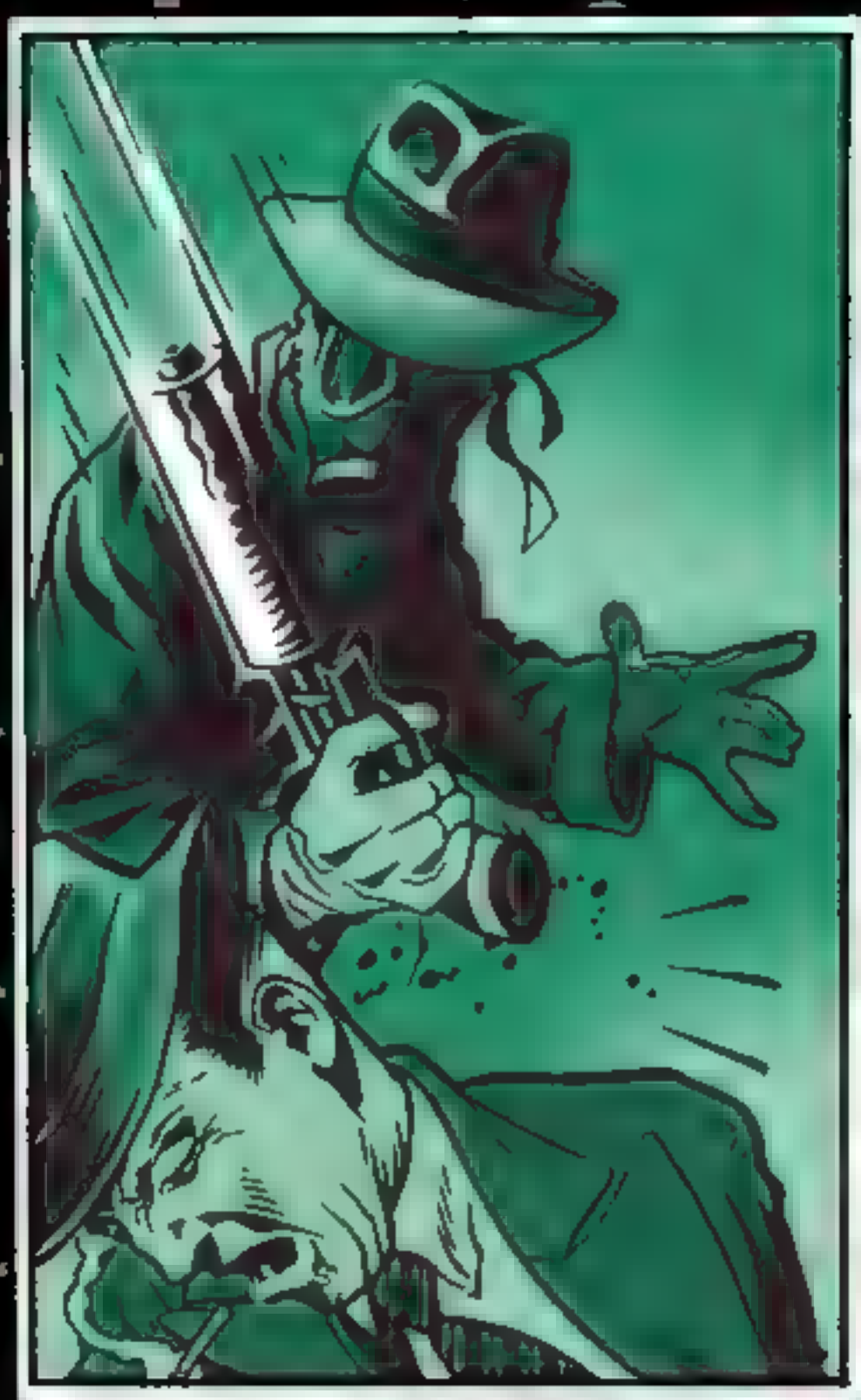
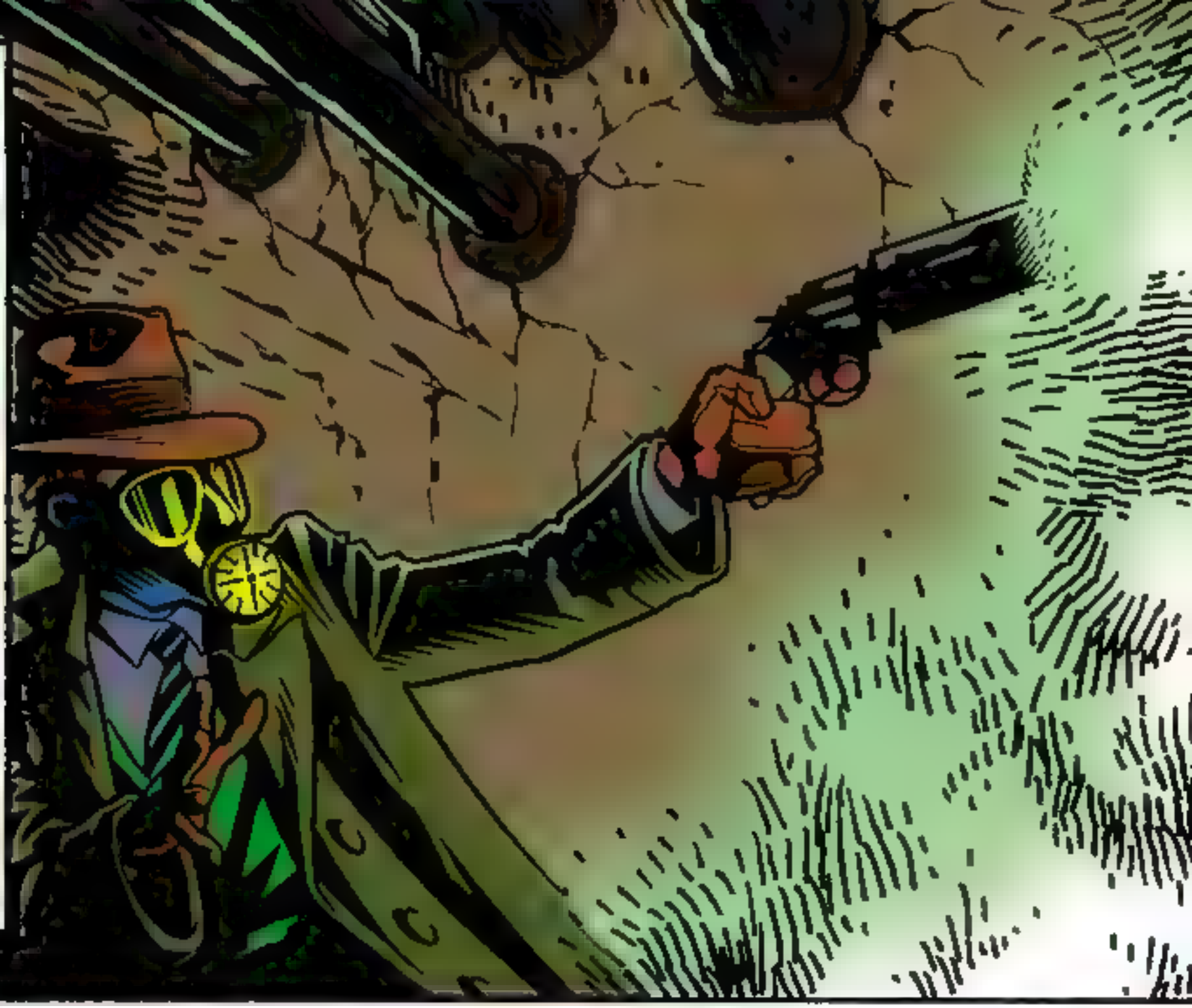


NO.

BUT...



...WHEN DOES
THAT STOP SUCH
AS WE?

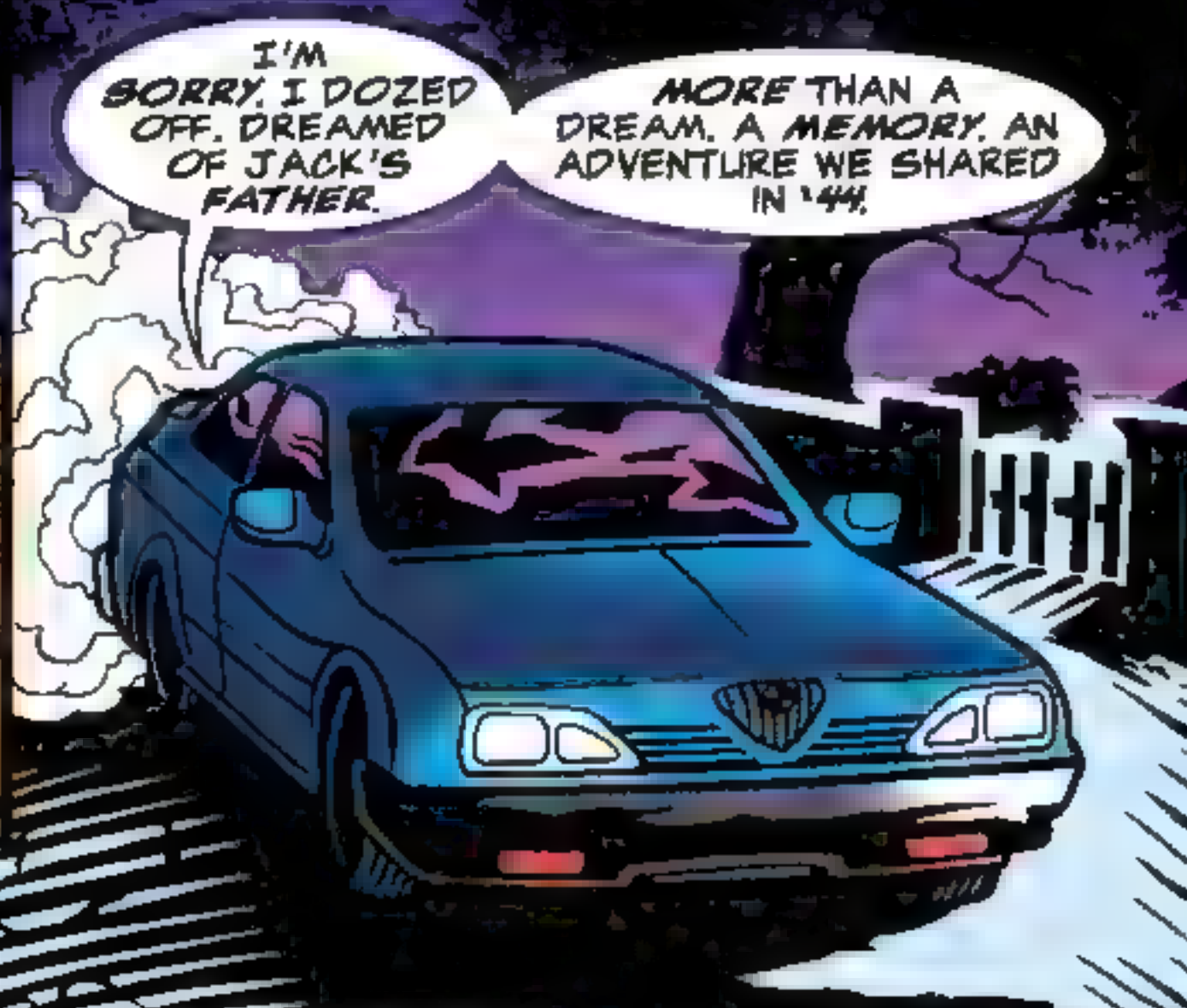






...WESLEY...

...WE
SHALL BE
THERE **SOON**.



I'M
SORRY, I DOZED
OFF. DREAMED
OF JACK'S
FATHER.

MORE THAN A
DREAM. A MEMORY. AN
ADVENTURE WE SHARED
IN '44.



I WISH
TED HAD
COME WITH
YOU.

I'LL MAKE HIM
VISIT **SOON**, WESLEY. I'LL
TELL HIM WHAT YOU SAID
ABOUT THE **QUALITY** OF
LIFE OUTWEIGHING THE
QUANTITY.



POOR TED. I
KNOW YOUR MOTHER'S
DEATH LEFT A PALLOR ON
HIS LIFE. AND THEN THERE
WAS DIANA. SHE BROKE
HIS HEART, TOO.

DIAN?



NO, DIANA.
DIANA LANCE.
ONE OF OUR
GROUP. A SUPER
HEROINE. SHE
CAME LATER TO
THE SCENE. SHE
WAS YOUNGER.

SHE AND TED
TEAMED UP ON
MORE THAN ONE
OCCASION.

AND?



HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED
MUCH OF THE LIFE, JACK?
THE HIGHS AND LOWS?
HOW DANGER CAN BE
EXHILARATING? HOW FEAR
CAN BE DELICIOUS? AND
HOW EMERGING
VICTORIOUS FROM A
SCRAPE CAN...WELL,
HOW IT CAN BE
ALMOST SEXUAL?



DIAN AND I...OUR INTIMATE
TIMES WOULD SHOCK YOU,
PERHAPS. THE INTENSITY.
AND I CAN'T HELP THINKING
SOME OF THAT WAS DUE TO
THE ADVENTURES WE
SHARED. HOW IT ALL
MERGED INTO ONE
EXPERIENCE.



DIANA.
SHE AND TED...
THEIR EXPLOITS LED
FROM ONE THING TO
THE NEXT. BUT I KNOW
THE AFFAIR DIDN'T LAST
LONG. BOTH OF THEM
WERE NEWLY PARENTS.
YOUR BROTHER WAS A
YEAR OLD, AND DINAH'S
DAUGHTER WAS NOT
EVEN THAT.



AND TED LOVED YOUR
MOTHER IN THE END. DIANA TOO,
HAD A HUSBAND. LARRY. A PRIVATE
DETECTIVE. SHABBY FELLOW. HE
SEEMED DISREPUTABLE. UNWORTHY
OF HER. OR SO JAY AND TERRY AND
I ALL THOUGHT. DIANA LOVED
HIM, THOUGH.



BUT THEN LARRY
SACRIFICED HIS LIFE TO
SAVE THE PLANET. MORE
HEROIC ACT THAN I'VE
EVER DONE, SO I
GUESS HE SHOWED
ALL OF US.

WESLEY, IS
THIS THE KIND
OF THING YOU
SHOULD BE
TELLING JACK?
HIS FATHER'S
PAST?



NO, MS.
BELMONT.
I'M GLAD.
KNOWING MY
FATHER IS...REAL.
NOT JUST
SMARTS AND A
COSTUME.
LEARNING THAT
ALL OF YOU
BACK THEN WERE
PEOPLE AT THE
SAME TIME
YOU WERE
HEROES.



IT BRINGS ME CLOSER
TO IT ALL. TO MY FATHER.
WHY STARMAN... THE NAME
AND ALL...WHAT IT MEANT
THEN AND WHY IT STILL
MEANS SO MUCH.

IS THAT ALL YOU
WANT OUT OF LIFE,
JACK? TO BE LIKE YOUR
FATHER? A HERO?



I USED TO
WANT TO PAINT.
I STUDIED ART.
THEN THE NEED
FOR THAT LEFT
ME.

NOW I
CAN ONLY
THINK OF ONE
THING I
WANT.

AND
WHAT
WOULD
THAT BE,
JACK?





WE'RE
HERE.



NOW I DID
LEARN THAT THE
FIRST TIER OF
DEFENSE IS
HOVERING CAMERA
DEVICES.

YOU NEED TO
GET OVER THE FENCE
BUT THEN STAY LOW,
BECAUSE THERE ARE
SENSORS MONITORING
THE AIR AROUND THE
COMPOUND. YOU CAN'T
FLY IN, JACK.



AND
THERE'S SOME KIND
OF GAS GAYLE'S USING
AS A SECONDARY
DEFENSE. YOU'LL HAVE
TO GUARD AGAINST
THAT TOO.

HOW?



HERE. IT
PROBABLY
SMELLS A
BIT FUNNY, BUT
IT SHOULD
SERVE ITS
PURPOSE.

WESLEY!
I DON'T
KNOW WHAT TO
SAY!

WHY? IT'S
JUST MY MASK,
JACK.

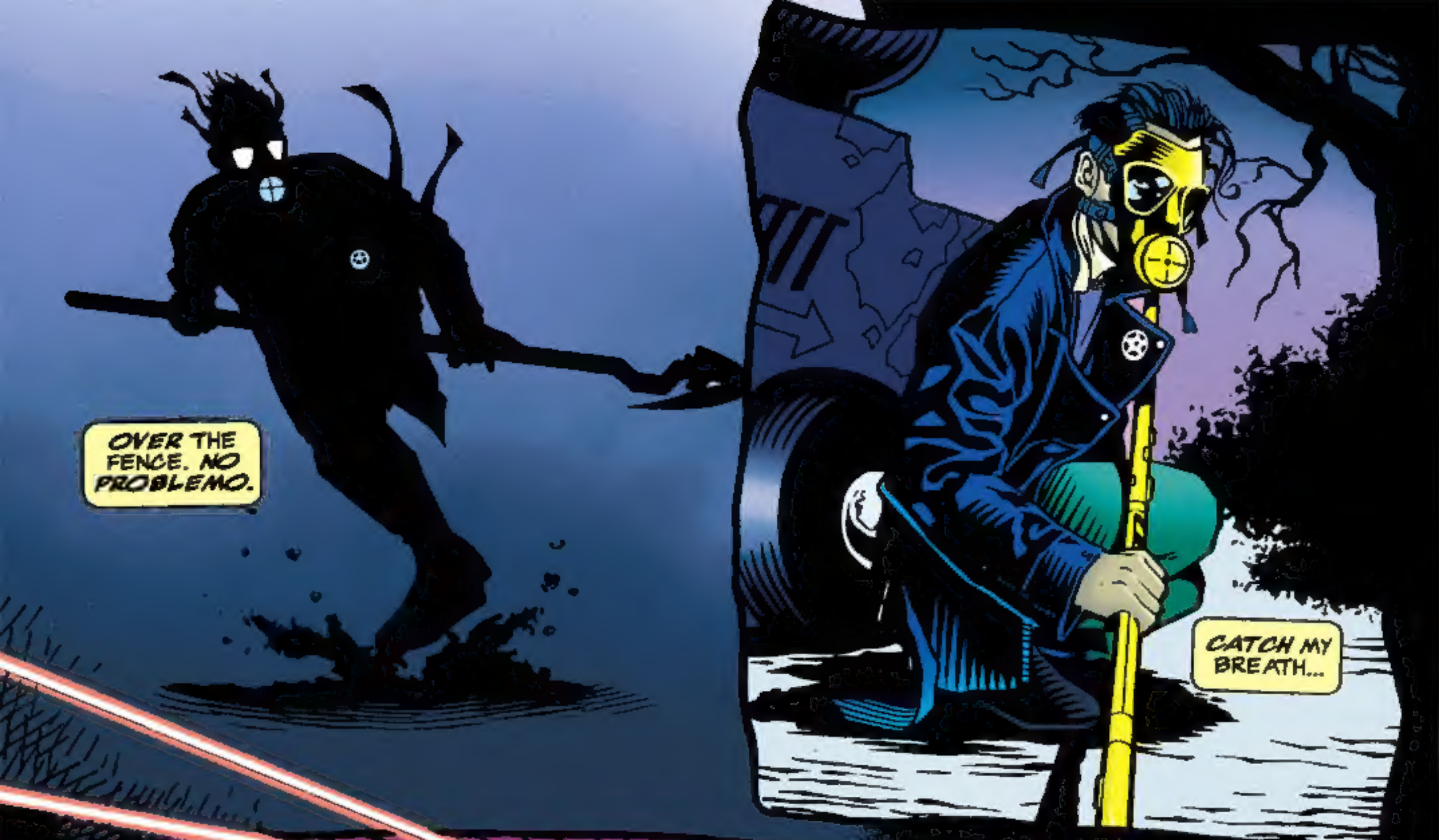


NO. IT'S
HISTORY.

AND FINALLY
THERE ARE THE
ARMORED GUARDS. I
CAN'T HELP YOU THERE,
JACK. YOU'LL JUST
HAVE TO DO YOUR
BEST.

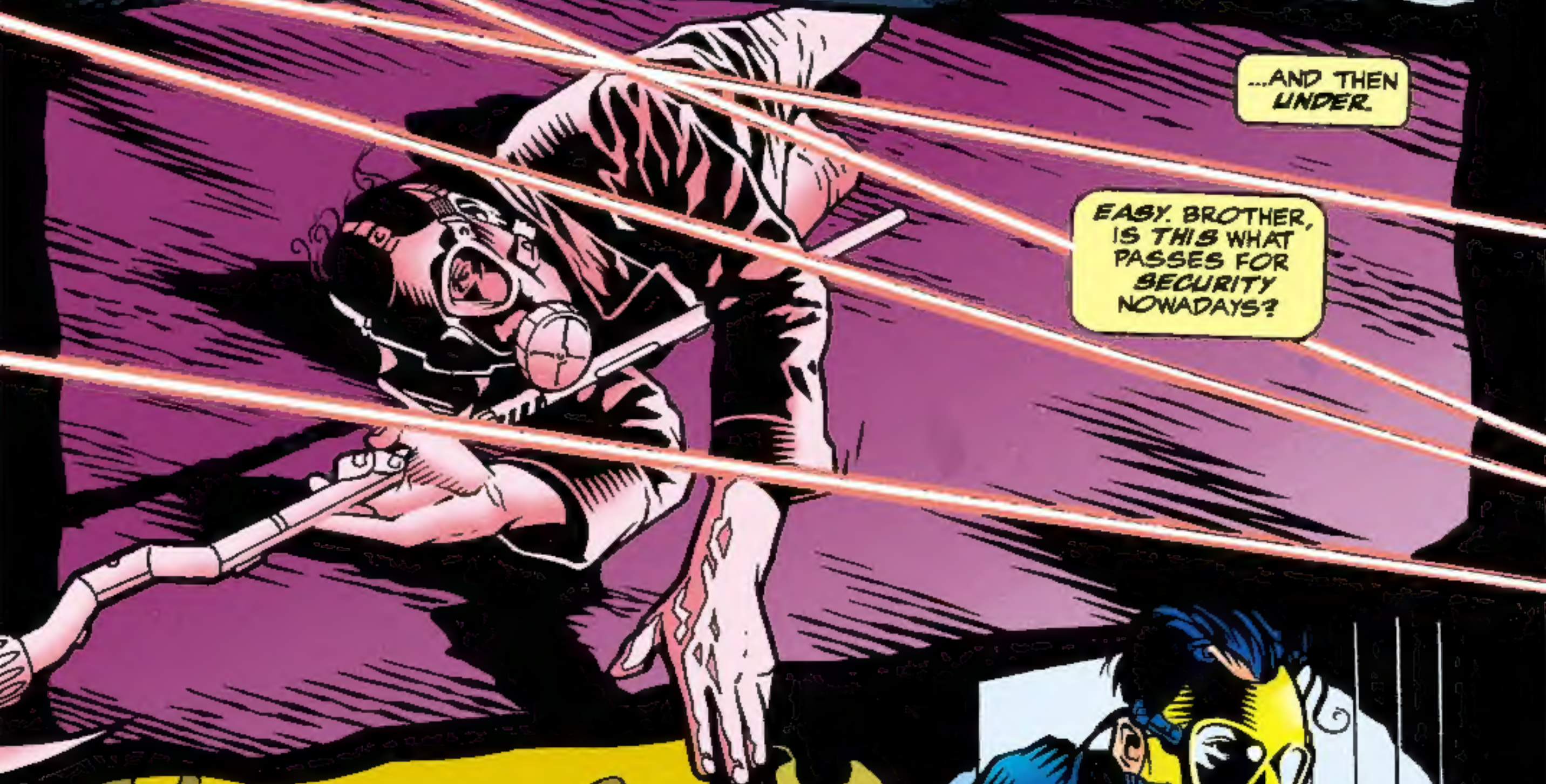


GIVE
ME TWO
HOURS.



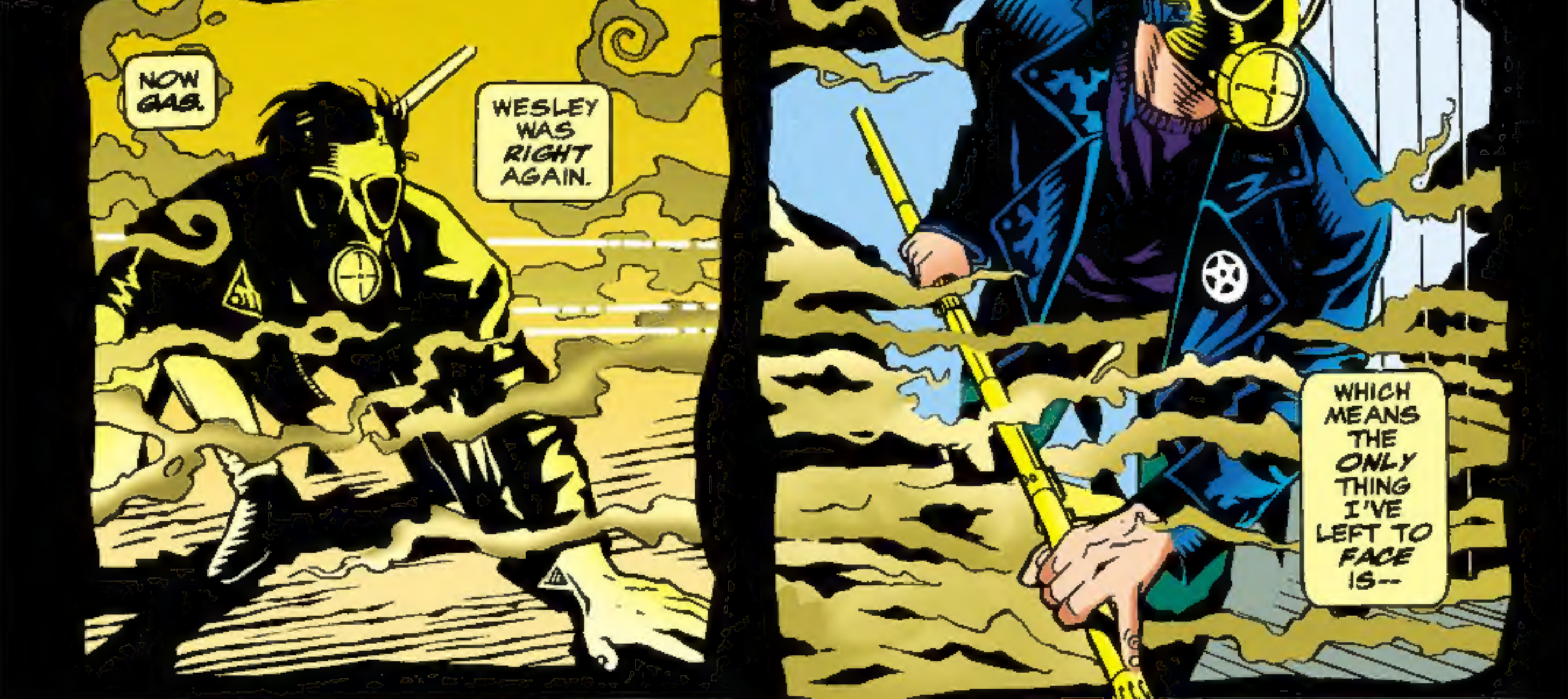
OVER THE
FENCE. NO
PROBLEMO.

CATCH MY
BREATH...



...AND THEN
UNDER.

EASY. BROTHER,
IS THIS WHAT
PASSES FOR
SECURITY
NOWADAYS?



NOW
GAS.

WESLEY
WAS
RIGHT
AGAIN.

WHICH
MEANS
THE
ONLY
THING
I'VE
LEFT TO
FACE
IS--



"I HOPE JACK WILL BE
ALL RIGHT, WESLEY."

"IF HE'S ANYTHING LIKE
HIS FATHER, I'M SURE
HE'LL BE FINE, DIAN."

"I'M SURE EVERY-
THING WILL BE FINE."

to be continued.

Deadman Wade

"THIS IS WHAT
AWESOME
LOOKS LIKE".

DCP